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山水刊

SHAN SHUI

MOUNTAIN AND WATER PAINTING MAGAZINE

山水

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Together, the board works to ensure that Shanshui Magazine remains an open platform for dialogue — where traditional wisdom, artistic practice, and contemporary thought meet to explore new forms of cultural and aesthetic sustainability.

Art is one of the deepest expressions of human thought — a way to communicate ideas, emotions, and visions of the world. Every artist, rooted in their own culture, reflects not only personal experience but also the intellectual and spiritual traditions of their society.

At Shanshui Magazine, we believe that art is a powerful tool for intercultural dialogue. By exploring the encounter between Chinese and Western artistic traditions, we aim to build bridges between two great civilizations and encourage a renewed understanding of art and nature.

Chinese shanshui (mountain and water) painting — with its 1,500 years of history — offers an alternative vision of the world, where harmony between humans and nature is central. This philosophy contrasts yet beautifully complements Western aesthetics, opening new ways of seeing and creating.

Our magazine presents contemporary Chinese and international artists, research on painting theory, and reflections on environmental aesthetics. We wish to make these ideas accessible not only to academics but to anyone curious about the living dialogue between art, ecology, and culture.

Through this magazine, we hope to promote a form of artistic expression that helps us rethink our relationship with reality, with nature, and with each other — beyond cultural boundaries.

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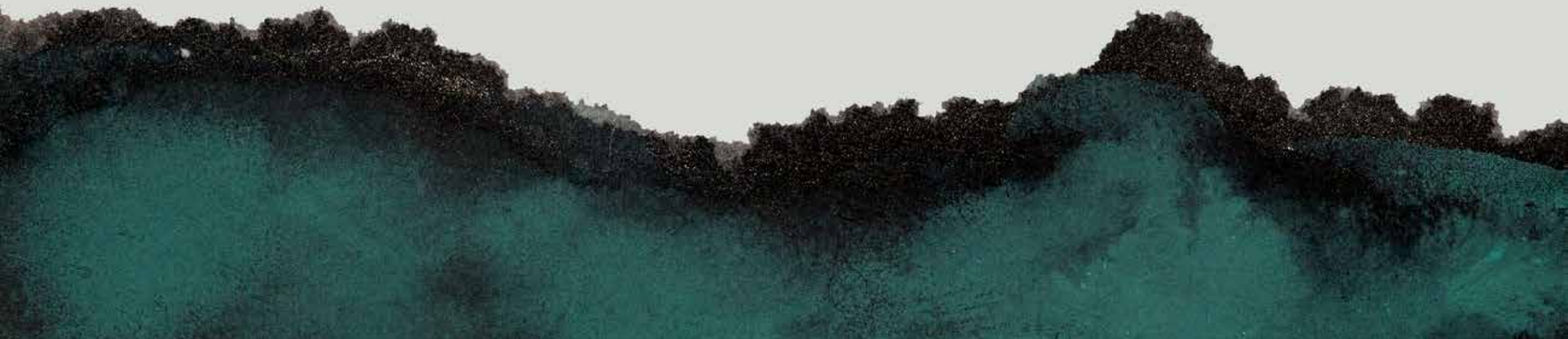


MANIFESTO

We find ourselves living in the era of globalization. Thanks to the infosphere that we live in, with just one click we can be in Togo, with two clicks you can be studying Sanskrit, with three you're already updated on what's going on in Bhutan, and with four more clicks you're listening to a piece played with the duduk, and immediately after we could be looking at two whirling dervishes. In half a day we become experts in Armenian music, Sufi spirituality, Himalayan geopolitics and in any other aspect of world culture.

Fantastic. Finally, a world without cultural barriers, devoted to exchange and access to mutual knowledge. In this global village without borders, we dance to the beat of superficiality, sloppy culture and of cultural arrogance, where ignorance is adorned with two-dimensional images, where the concept of "knowing that you do not know" has been abolished, although without knowing.

Ah I forgot, in this Village the chief is western, the customs and habits are mostly western, the linguistic and material means of communication are western, like almost every intellectual expression and world view of its inhabitants. The inhabitants tend to ignore what is found outside the Village, not by choice, but by condition, not out of lack of curiosity, but because of the limited means. The Village is truly global on a physical level, it truly embraces the entire earth's surface, but in fact it remains on the surface, it does not deepen, and if it deepens it does it in its own way, as it would in the centre from which it developed. In fact, the Village is ancient and full of History and histories, it has always had to do with multiculturalism, always in expansion and translation, but only recently has it reached global status.

The Village is now global, so everyone is welcome but the rules to follow are those of the village head. Everyone can bring something to the table, but it will still have to be adapted to the matrix of the Village.

With these premises, it is possible to face and analyse infinite issues concerning the actual state of the alleged globalization. Of how, for instance, it is believed to know different cultures, but that in reality this knowledge is based only on a store of empty images which are then filled with the world view of the aforementioned head of the Village. The same goes for that mercantile capitalism that has come to every corner of the globe, but that manages to give the best of itself only if it follows the needs of the Village.

We stand against a single world view, when in fact there are many. The ones that does not support diversity, but translates them, one that does not make them participate in the debate with their own voices, but accepts them only after a trial of metamorphosis. We are against the imperialism of tastes and customs, of judgment, of means of expression, and of what to express, a situation which inevitably leads to a cultural flattening. Against this self-proclaimed global Village, it does not have the ability to see neighbouring villages, since he believes that all possible villages are within him.

We as Sino-artists (mostly of non-Chinese origin, who live in China, who devote themselves to the study and practice Chinese painting, even without having a structured training of Western origin behind them), will focus on the areas concerning our cultural sphere, precisely that of Chinese art. Especially those related to painting, with a particular eye for landscape painting, which from now on we will call according to the Chinese denomination, mountain and water painting

"shanshui hua 山水画"

The main will is to communicate with the Village through our art and our words, trying to present one of the many shaded areas with which it is scattered. Our task is to find a language that is intelligible to the Village as well as faithful to the original meaning. Without smoothing its diversity, without avoiding clashes, without sweetening the pill. In this way it will be the Village that will make the effort to understand, and only in this way will the communication be successful. In fact, we trust in the Village's ability to understand languages not forged by itself.

The reasons that drive us in this campaign are varied and erudition is not one of those. At best it can be a side effect.

One of the biggest problems of the Village is that he believes that only movements of progress or evolutions exist inside it, only he has reached the status of "modern", and those who are not indigenous come from a static culture, backward and anchored to the past; without the use of the means forged by the Village and without its revolutionary spirit no one can participate in the dialogue of contemporaneity. So, to finally get into the subject, in the Village Chinese painting is traditional, therefore linked to the past, unable to evolve, something good just for the art history books and museums, worthy of respect, but with the same respect that is given for archaeological finds.

There is no conception of a modern or contemporary Chinese painting, also because when the term Chinese painting is pronounced, for some reason it is always accompanied by the adjective "traditional", which clearly denies the concept of modernity. Chinese art can only be defined as modern if expressed through the means and processes of modern western art.

Revelation! There is modern and contemporary Chinese art; mountain and water painting has been evolveing for at least 1500 years, and continues to evolve, and other painting exppressions are even older. As obvious as it seems, China is extremely large, therefore there are many centres of cultural irradiation, and for this

reason there are various schools within China that follow different pictorial expressions. Consequently there is not just one movement of contemporary Chinese painting.

Our main objective follows:

To spread the knowledge of contemporary Chinese painting outside of China, and to give voice to the great artists of the last century as well as to the new young artists.

Why is it important you may ask? For starters, in order to make sense of the term globalization. But above all, to enrich the Village and to redefine its ideas of intellectual absolutism.

Chinese art, together with all the other intellectual expressions of China, refers to a system of values that has come down to the present day from ancient times. This great apparatus of knowledge and ideas has influenced and is still influencing the world view of Chinese people and of course also their artistic expressions. The same discourse can be re-proposed in a general way also to the evolution of the western mind, a process that probably was less coherent than the Chinese one, which however led to the formation of various expressions of thought rooted in the conception of the world that the Village forged during its evolution. And this is exactly the key point of our reasoning, once the world interpretation system is established, it is almost impossible to get out of it, as it is invisible, and its boundaries are not recognizable. Because it being the only view you know, you believe that it is the only view that exists. Just to clarify, it's like those unfortunate people who were chained in the platonic cave. It wasn't until someone came in from the outside, did they realize the condition they were in.

This was also the case for China until the mid-nineteenth century. China behaved like the Village, just another Village that did not see those who were outside of it, except of course through its own modalities. And even though external cultural influences were accepted, it was always retranslated in Chinese terms, just like the Village does. As a consequence, there was a sense of cultural superiority compared to that which was not Chinese. Until one terrible day, when the barbarians arrived with cannons and rifles and destroyed the armies of the great empire. On that day, besides the fall of many lives, many certainties also fell in terms of value. Their system had not protected them from catastrophe, as it once did since the dawn of Chinese culture. This was not the first time that China fell into the hands of foreigners, and every time the foreigners were sinicized. Thus, their cultural continuity persisted. However, the value system was still slowly collapsing to the point where it almost disappeared. Since then it has rebuilt itself, but the system of the other foreign villages took a hold as well, strong of its modernity.

Accordingly, in contemporary China it can be said that there are two systems, the original and the imported one. The same could be said for the world of art, but art can be applied at will on any area. This has created a unique situation where the two worlds communicate with each other, sometimes one taking over the other, creating conflicts but also a very fertile ground for creativity.

It is exactly for this reason that we want to make this new system of thought known to the Village, only then will it be able to see its own boundaries, so that it will be able to ask new questions and give itself new answers.

Let's take a concrete example. The ancient western visual arts and the Renaissance up to modernity, basically acted in the field of mimesis. In painting, all the techniques to represent the visual aspect of the surrounding world comes together. Now coming back to the Village, to top it all, there was this terrifying yoke called Albertan's perspective. The Village gave a great deal of value to the sight, making it almost the only tool for perceiving reality. Establishing invisible perceptual borders because they were all-encompassing. However, at a certain point artists and intellectuals got tired of this conception and thus historical avant-garde was born. Unfortunately, not knowing any other way of perceiving the world other than the anthropocentric one of the gaze, they found themselves in a rather uncomfortable position, so much so that the path ended with destruction of the form and that of the painting itself, and having to resort to new media to be able to express themselves. It is precisely for these reasons that in contemporary era we refer to paintings as an "old lady" who keeps up with new artistic expressions with great difficulty.

So where is all this getting at? In China, the influence of western art came between the late 1800s and early 1900's. The first to arrive was via Japan, the realistic techniques of the Barbizon school. And what were the most shocking innovations for the Chinese? Mimesis, focal perspective, chiaroscuro, and all those techniques which at the time in the West were considered regressed, representatives of a system that in those years the avant-gardes despised because of its anti-contemporary expressions. Why was this seen in China as revolutionary and innovative? Because traditional pictorial theories disgusted the view and representation of form as perceived by our eyes, therefore it was an almost completely unexplored area.

China has had the good fortune of meeting and accepting a different way of interpreting the world, so why should the Village be deprived of it?

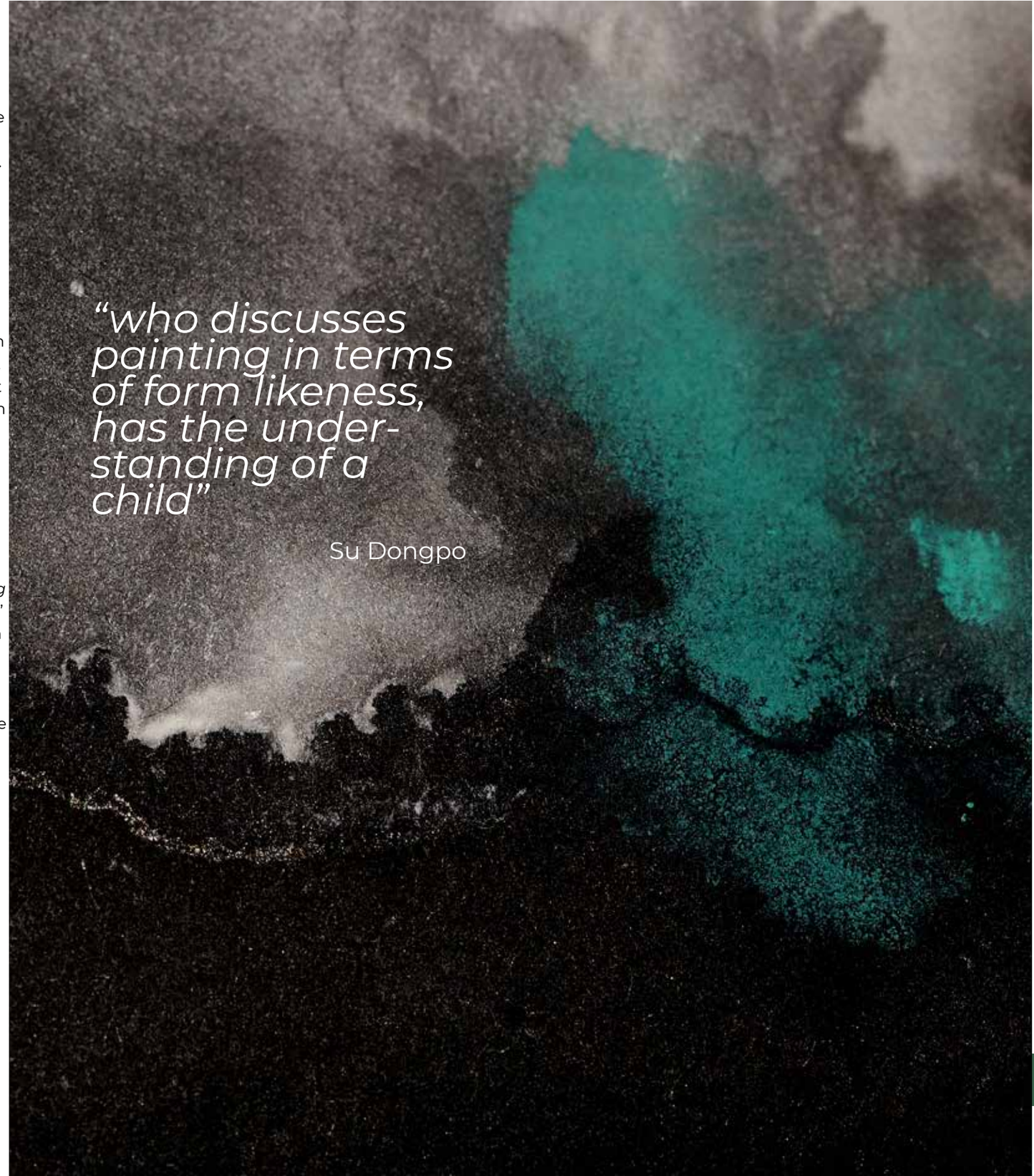
Just how much could a new way of understanding reality help the old painting of the Village? A whole world would open up, which should not mimic the Chinese one, but be inspired by it. So, we also take sides against the supremacism of sight and consequently against anthropocentrism. Our desire is to introduce these new visions, these new conceptions, and these new values. Not that the Village is completely unaware of it, but this knowledge is hidden in academic publications, accessible to those interested in the subject, but very far from the world of contemporary art or anyone else.

To conclude, we will introduce one of these intrinsic aspects of Chinese art which can be of great help and source of inspiration for our beloved Village. Why is mountain and water painting of great value in the contemporary world and why should the Village re-evaluate it? In the great pictorial experience of the Village, landscape painting as an independent genre was born late and died early. The fact that in China it is already the higher form of painting and has a millennium and a half of history should make us ask

questions about how it has probably been underestimated. Well, in reality it has not been underestimated, in fact there is no right and wrong in art, it has been evaluated according to the means that the Village head, according to the conceptions and ideas, precisely for this reason, I repeat, we must open the doors to new value systems.

Art cannot be alienated from the reality in which it is produced, and one of the most important themes for us is that of ecology, in fact this hyper capitalist Village has massacred the world in which we live and does not seem to want to take steps back. Many have already set in motion to counter this destructive madness, but there is no contest. In the Village there has recently been talk of environmental aesthetics that lashes out against anthropocentrism to concert on environmental beauties, therefore going against one, the axioms of western aesthetics since ancient Greece, against that conception that sees man as the superior creature and dominant in the ecumene. This new point of view, at least for the Village, is one of the basic aspects of Chinese ethics, philosophy and aesthetics, is found in the texts at the base of Chinese culture, at the basis of Confucian philosophy and Daoist thought and continues to be repeated until modern times, conception that does not just appreciate environmental beauties, but its holistic conception of the universe puts man on the same level as any other creation of nature. In *Yi Zhuan* 易传 (5th century BCE), a commentary on *Yi Jing* 易经, it is written that “the greatest virtue of heaven and earth is life” (天地之大德曰生), that is to say that the greatest virtue is to create an environment where all life forms and natural elements can coexist in harmony.

For this reason, too, the category of still life does not exist in Chinese painting, in fact for the Chinese artist it would be absurd to paint lifeless subjects.
For these and other reasons, the Village and the artists that reside in it will benefit from learning Chinese art. Mountain and water painting will inspire them, the beauty of nature will awaken the minds and set the minds in motion. The boundaries of the Village will begin to appear and we can finally begin to break them down.



1

Why mountain and water painting?

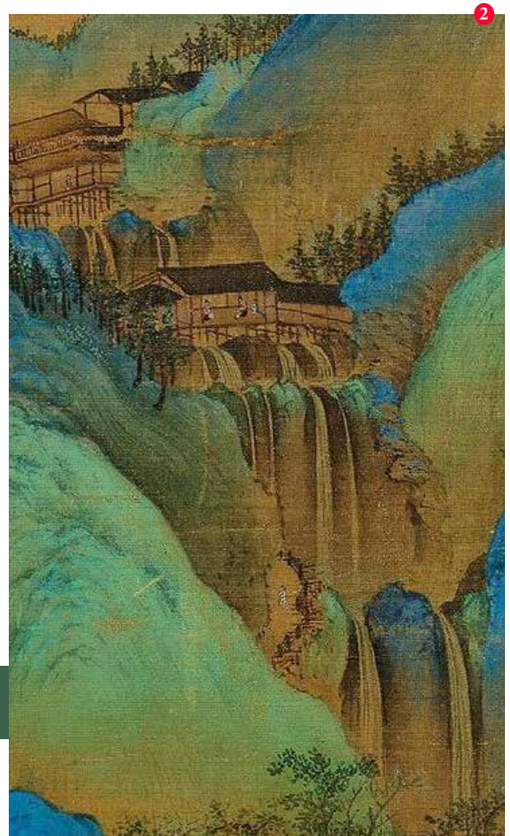
By; Giacomo Bruni

Why do we say “mountain and water painting” and not how it would be customary to say, “landscape painting”?

Mountain and water painting is the literal translation of the Chinese denomination *Shanshui hua* 山水画, therefore the field of our artistic productions and observations that are going to be made will belong to the sphere of Chinese painting. But this is not the only reason, nor is it the most important one.

The main motive lies in the actual meaning of the term landscape. If we look at European languages, the term “landscape” is relatively recent (XV-XVI century), and always refers to a portion of land. *Land-* in Germanics languages and *pays-* and its variations in the Romance languages and in various other Slavic languages. The portion of land is what is

contemplated by the artist or by a viewer in general, so it is limited by the sense of sight. Contemplation presupposes the gaze that goes from the observer to the subject in front of him, an act that inevitably is static and limiting. This is even more true when the landscape is represented in visual arts. In this area, western painting and photography bends to the laws of sight and to a focal perspective, presenting a view of a portion of the land which can even be 360 degrees but it still remains a view. In this case, the landscape work of art can be completely embraced in an instant with a single glance, not because of the size of the work, but because of its structure. For this reason, it is static as it cancels time and movement. Another effect that it produces is extraneousness. The work reproducing the visual perception of the artist automatically places him outside the scene, and the same applies to those who look at it.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Staticity, estrangement and submission to visual laws are three aspects that come into serious conflict with Chinese landscape painting. *Shanshui hua* means mountain (*shan*) and water (*shui*) painting (*hua*), a name that defines the favourite subjects of this pictorial category. The name alone shows an aspect of movement: the duality between mountains - static and massive elements - and the waters - everflowing and everchanging - well expresses the archetype Yin and Yang, namely the opposites that do not enter in conflict, but need each other to give full expressions of themselves. Furthermore, the generality of the term breaks down spatial boundaries, those boundaries that recall the terms *land-* or *pays-*.

In Mountain and water painting, the focal perspective is seen as an expressive limit. The viewer must not feel stuck in a portion of the landscape, nor outside of it. It must portray the feeling of being able to move freely inside of it and also feel surrounded by it.

These assumptions, while giving life to different works, which naturally produce different sensations from the western ones, lead the artist to deal with the subject and with the production of the work in different ways. The most eloquent example is the fact that the painting process of mountain and water does not include painting *en plein air*.

In Europe, *en plein air* painting was introduced by the Barbizon school and then taken up by the impressionist landscape painters or by painters such as De Nittis who painted in a carriage that was transformed into a mobile atelier. These artists hoped to make their works as “real” as possible, as if they were in a silent challenge against the new-born photography.

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In fact, the Barbizon school is a landscape current of realism and the impressionist landscape painters, most notably Monet, were fascinated by the luminous variations. Light is the fundamental mean that makes visual perception possible. Western Renaissance and modern paintings that are basically mimetic, gives to light a major part which shows just how much in Western thought, the perception of reality is tied to the perception of the vision. In pictorial sense this is a key factor that has influenced and continues to influence artistic productions. In fact, it is very difficult for a Westerner to detach himself from the axiom / yoke of sight.

Unlike in the Chinese context, *en plein air* painting is considered limiting, precisely because it binds the artist to the visual perception of the environment he wants to recreate, which in turn produces all those problems mentioned before. Explanatory is a passage from an essay on the painting of mountain and water by a great painter of the Song dynasty will perfectly summarize this concept. Guo Xi lived during the eleventh century, and in his *Linquan gaozhi* 《林泉高致》 writes:

A mountain seen up close has one aspect, and it has another a few miles away, and yet another one from further away. Its shape changes with each step. The front view of a mountain has one view, another view from the side and another from behind. Its appearance changes from every angle, as many times as it does the point of view. So, it is necessary to realize that a mountain combines in itself several thousand shapes.

山近看如此，远数里看又如此，远十数里看又如此，每远每异，所谓山形步步移也。山正面如此。侧面又如此，背面又如此，每看每异，所谓山形面面看也。如此是一山而兼数十百山之形状，可得不悉乎？

Reading this passage, it is evident that *en plein air* painting, and the Albertian perspective is not a suitable mean to represent mountains or nature in general, and as a unifocal gaze is totally inadequate. Therefore, to represent a complex subject such as the mountain, first of all, a process of study and assimilation of the subject is necessary, and only then will it be possible to represent it through a painting. Another implicit aspect in these lines is that this painting will not consider only a portion of the territory, but it will attempt to express the totality of the subject, precisely through the use of different perspectives. Sight is a means of knowl-

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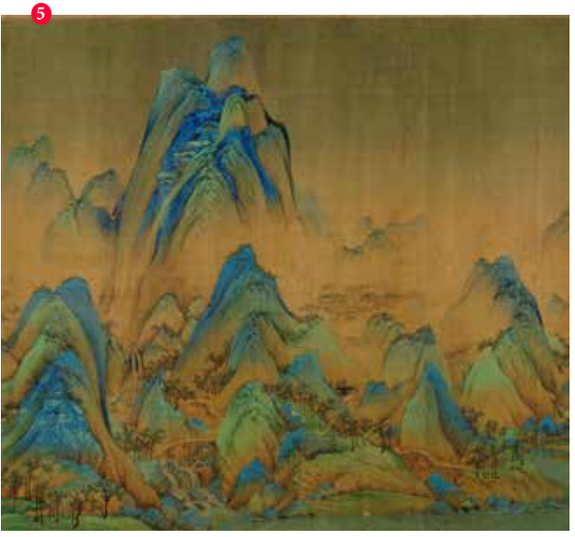
edge of the subject and one of the rules to be followed in the representation, but not the only one. The skill of the painter lies in being able to harmonize different points of view and different perspectives in a single work, making it harmonious and natural in the eyes of the observer.

In order to be able to express the richness and variety of his subject, the artist needs a deep knowledge of it, which it will not be possible to acquire through a single point of view, but needs a more complex and profound relationship with the environment and nature. For this reason, many of the greatest mountain and water painters in Chinese history embraced a life outside the cities and from the centres of political activity, to move to the solitude of the mountains and live in close contact with the subject of their art. In any case, the visual experience is an important aspect for the artist in order to represent his subject.

The obstacles when visually approaching the natural environment is a problem that has been treated since the time of the first theoretical texts on mountain and water painting. The first systematic theoretical text *Introduction to Painting of mountain and water* 《画山水序》 by Zong Bing 宗炳 dates back to the first part of the fifth century. In this early treatise we can already see how only relying on sight to perceive and depict mountains and waters is a limitation, a partial understanding. The primary problems dealt with were the proportions of the various subjects and the possibility of representing vast distances on small surfaces such as those of pictorial support. The reflection on proportions is very important, in fact in texts related to painting we do not find statements like "what is close is large and what is far away is small, in proportions of its distance from the observer", a rule that is at the base of the unifocal perspective. There are statements like those of Wang Wei 王维 in the treatise *On mountains and waters* 《山水论》, that stand out. In one passage he states: "a mountain measures a *zhang*, a tree a *chi*, a horse a *cun*, a man a *fen*", "丈山尺树，寸马分人" , therefore by physical measurements (expressed in different measure units) are applied in painting. Afterwards he proceeds to give practical indications on how to paint distant subjects: "distant men have no eyes, distant trees have no branches, distant mountains have no stones, so they should be painted like indistinctive eyebrows; the water in the distance cannot see waves, so they should be connected with the clouds and sky "," 远人无目，远树无枝，远山无石，隐隐如眉；远水无波，高与天齐 ". In these passages we see how the author never talks about the change in size and proportions of what was being observed, because a tree near or far, in reality always has the same height, its shrinking is an illusion. The difference in size of the subjects within the work is only partially related to the proximity or distance factor, there are other factors that compete for it. These other factors follow the expressive needs of the artist, which elements he wants to give relevance to and which less, and how these elements relate to each other within the painting, between main and secondary subjects, following the natural relations between them. The differences in size of the various subjects are not in relation to the observer or the painter of the scene, but are in relation to each other, Guo Xi writes: "a mountain that rises in its size becomes the master of the other peaks developed around it, it becomes the centre of attraction of the elements that surround it. Whether large or small, distant or close, like a king receiving homage from his courtiers "," 大山堂堂为众山之主，所以分布以次冈阜林蟹，为远近大小之宗主也。其象若大君 赫然当阳，而百辟奔走朝会，无僵塞背却之势也 。" It is the same concept expressed in a more concise way by Wang Wei: "First, the orientation and height of the main mountain must be determined, then follow the peaks that surround it ", "定宾主之朝揖，列群峰之威仪".

During the Song dynasty, perspective techniques were standardized, which lead to the general descriptions of the expressive possibilities of the artist in approaching mountain and water painting, and formalizing the scattered perspective system. The first to do so was Guo Xi, with his three distances rule: the hight distance rule (*gaoyuan* 高远), observes and reproduces the subject as if it was looked at in all its height, from top to bottom and from bottom to the top, used in particular to represent large mountainous bodies in order to express all their grandeur and magnificence (p.8). The second is the deep distance rule (*shenyuan* 深远), that is, to describe the depth 'of the environment, therefore valleys, rivers, or other natural elements that develop in depth, which moves away from the observer (p.4). The third is the level distance (*pingyuan* 平远), which describes landscapes in the distance, with mountains that develop more horizontally than vertically, often characterized by large empty spaces that increase the feeling of distance and the vastness of spaces (p.6). Subsequently to Guo Xi, three other distances were added by another artist called Han Zhou 韩拙 (twelfth century), his perspective rules have a more atmospheric characterization than those from Guo Xi. The first is called broad distance (*kuoyuan* 阔远) which is characterized by large expanses of water that separate the observer from the mountains that rise in the distance, in this case increasing the feeling of emptiness and the perception of large spaces. The second is called shrouded distance (*miyuan* 迷远), where mist and fog almost hide the landscape, creating a feeling of mystery and quiet (p.7). The final one is remote distance (*youyuan* 幽远), which indicates those natural elements that are located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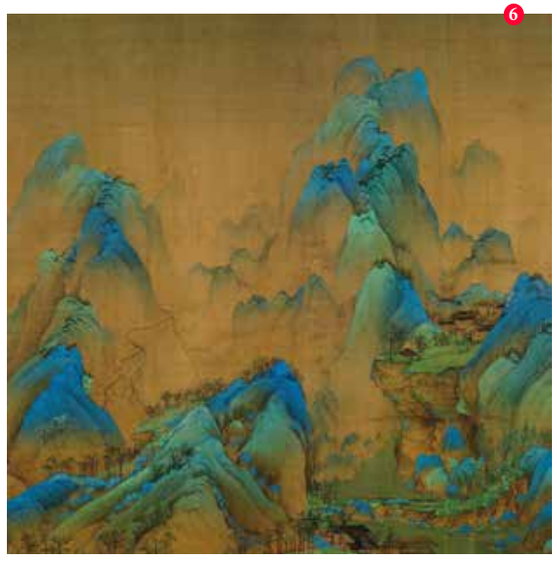
at a great distance, creating a scenario that the observer cannot reach (p.3). In addition to the formalization of the six distances, which had a lot of influence in the generations of successive painters, it is possible to find in theoretical or poetic texts, or through the observation of the paintings, other methodologies of visual approach by artists towards the subject to represent. In two poetic texts by Su Dongpo 苏东坡 (1037-1101) a dynamic and non-static approach is proposed in the observation of the natural environment. The first two verses of the poem *On the walls of Xilin* 《题西林壁》 quote: "looking from the side, a mountain range appears, in front you can see the peaks; highs, lows, near, distant, all are different ","横看成岭侧成峰，远近 高低各不同" , he refers to the fact that for each point of view the scenery of Mount Lu 庐山 changes. The same concept expressed by another poem entitled *Looking at the mountains from the river*《上江看山》, where the author describes how the mountains changes the appearance of his journey as his boat runs along the river.
This concept is indicated by the idiomatic phrase "*bubu youjing*" 步步有景，that is that the landscape is formed step by step, and not just by standing in front of it. It is the same concept expressed by Guo Xi when he says "Its shape [of the mountain] changes with each step". In these terms, the landscape can only be seen through movement, that is, by walking through it, inside and outside, as with each step a change is created in the observer's mind through an accumulation of images. This observation methodology is particularly suitable for mountain scenarios, where rocks, trees and rocky masses cover the view of what is behind them. However, if you are in a larger space, for instance lakes, large rivers or plains, the methodology of observation and representation will be different. In this case it is the spatial vastness that makes it impossible to embrace everything with a single glance, therefore the only way is to collect different spatial portions and join them together to fully represent the subject. The same way of viewing and applying on painting can be used to represent areas very distant from each other, through a process of omission. In this sense, it is possible to take a nearby environmental portion and, through a "space jump",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place it alongside a very distant one, omitting everything in between.

Through these two visual methodologies we go against a large amount of material since the natural world is extremely rich and varied, but not all its elements are necessary for the artistic realization of a work. This is also because the presence of excessive quantities of subjects would make the painting confusing and unpleasant, which would make it impossible to communicate the spirit of the natural environment the painter intends to portray to the observer. For this reason, those who observe the subject must make a selection of the necessary and aesthetically relevant elements, following the principle expressed in the last two verses of the poem *Plum blossom* 《梅花》 by Li Fangying 李方膺 (1695-1755) which quote: "the eyes they see countless flowers, but only two or three branches are really pleasant ","触目横斜千万朵，赏心只有两三枝". In this case the author refers to the plum branches, which when they bloom are loaded with flowers, but only a few follow our aesthetic taste and therefore it is worth painting. Another aspect is that expressed by the phrase "a thousand mountains can be painted, but only one has a green top", "千山多入画，只取一青峰" , that is to say that if we paint a large amount of mountains or other subjects, not all of them must be represented in a rich and detailed way so that all attract the observer's attention in the same way, but only one, or some, depending on the needs of the work, must be richly depicted, otherwise the work becomes heavy and draining for those who are preparing to observe it, depriving them of the pleasure of an aesthetic experience (p.5). Another method of observation of the natural environment, and in particular the mountainous ones, is what is called "observing the big through the small" "以大观小", formalized by Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031-1095), in his *Brush Talks from a Dream Brook*《梦溪笔谈》, where he suggests that a mountain scenario can only be understood if viewed from above and from afar, that is, by climbing a hill, inside or outside the area, so that it is possible to embrace it by observing the whole environment that we propose to observe or paint. In this way we will be able to understand its structure and development methods, which would be impossible if we were immersed in its vegetation, rocks or at the foot of some mountain. This concept is also expressed by Guo Xi when he says: "Mountains and rivers are large objects. The people who look at mountains and rivers should look at them from a distance, in this way is possible to grasp the form, the spirit, image and position of the mountains and rivers "," 山水大物也，人之看者须远而观之，方见得一障山川之形势气象" . Nevertheless, this concept was already formulized by Zong Bing when he says: "Kunlun Mountain is big and the eyes are small, if it's

too close to our eyes, we can't see its shape, If it is a few miles away, it will be easy to contain for the eyes", "且夫崑崙山之大 ，瞳子之小，迫目以寸，则其形莫睹，迴以数里，则可围于寸眸", in this passage the author suggests the necessity of having a distance view of the subject. The one from a distance is a rather wide and often a quite static view, in fact our eyes embrace a very large area, so even if we move the scenario that stretches in our sight, it would change little, for this reason this view must be compensated with what we previously learned. When we move inside or climb to the very top of a hill, we can then use it as a lookout. In this case the elements we observe are many, but also distant and small, so we will not be able to perceive a whole series of details, and all those minute elements that need proximity to be perceived, such as the texture of the rocks, the branches, trees and leaves, the human presence in the distance or any other subject. A factor that is compensated by observing these elements closely, and then integrated with the distant view (p.2). Similarly, looking closely at trees or rocks lead us to assimilate information on how the natural environment in which they are immersed develops. This method of observation is called "looking at the big through the small", "以小观大". A final element that confirms the absence of a unifocal perspective in mountain and water paintings are given to those subjects where the modes of representation have strong perspective characteristics, such as certain types of stones, rocks and buildings in particular. In fact, we see how in mountain and water paintings, buildings can follow different perspectives in the same portion of space, which are then combined in order to meet the artistic needs of the artist and do not in any way respect the laws of a static subjective vision (p.9).

The various ways of viewing the natural environment and the rules of the six distances are often all used simultaneously in the same painting. All of these methods combined, enable the artist to better represent the complexity of the natural scenery. For instance, let's take one of the most famous works in the history of mountain and water painting, by Wang Ximeng (王希孟，1096–1119). He was one of the most renowned court painters of the Northern Song dynasty, who painted a 51.5 cm and 11.9 meters long scroll titled *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* 《千里江山图》. This work was made on silk, revealing the lake and river scenery of the mountain complex of Mount Lu 庐山, in Jiangxi province. The mountains are signified by the use of green and blue. Misty and vast, the scenery ever-changing and magnificent. On the mountain, there are high cliffs and waterfalls, winding and quiet, red flowers, green willows, long pines and bamboo trees. In addition to the beauty and executive finesse, the painting also has an enormous narrative charge, describing a cross-section of a twelfth-century rural life in China.
In order to represent the richness of the area developed around Mount Lu, the artist uses all of the perspective and visual expedients that we have just illustrated. The great mountains are represented through height distance, the valleys and rivers that extends into the deep are represented through deep distance and the low mountains and hills that develop in the distance through level distance. The river is particularly suited to the three distances rule of Han Zhou, we find distant mountains behind a large stretch

of water in the broad distance, and the inaccessible scenarios of the remote distance and the mysterious and dreamlike ones of the shrouded distance. The artist certainly had crossed the area to be able to understand its development and training. He had observed it from a distance to understand its structure, which as Su Dongpo reminds us in the last two verses of the poem *On the walls of Xilin*: “I can’t see the real aspect of Mount Lu, since I am between its mountains “,”不识庐山真面目，只缘身在此山中”, referring to the concept of “looking at the big through the small”. Wang Ximeng observed the area of Mount Lu closely to grasp its details, it accompanies us in a microcosm rich in life, catapulting us into the rural society of central-eastern China 800 years ago. The painting is animated by about 360 characters, whose size does not exceed half a centimetre. Many of them are fishermen or travellers on foot (p.10) who travel on the many roads of the vast plains and mountains, the same path that Wang Ximeng himself travelled. We can see inns, bridges, places of worship and around a hundred boats used for travelling (p.1). We can also see almost 30 villages hidden in the mountains and by the river. The buildings are represented following different perspective rules, which adapt to the general harmony of the composition. The painting also displays the importance of fishing in the society during that time. In addition to the numerous fishermen on boats and along the shore with the rod, we can also see trabuccos and fish farms near the fishing villages. There are also several places of leisure with cultural activities, such as study centres and pavilions on top of the promontories where it would’ve been possible to admire the mountain and river landscape, creating a sort of meta-landscape. We see how the richness and complexity of the work is closely linked to the way in which the environment is observed. Such a painting would be impossible to create using the unifocal perspective or simply observing the area from a single point of view, it would involve a profound knowledge of a vast area through different methods of observation and consequently of representation.

Certainly, a single static point of view is not the means to represent nature and its complexity. Therefore, since the earliest times Chinese artists have endeavoured to find

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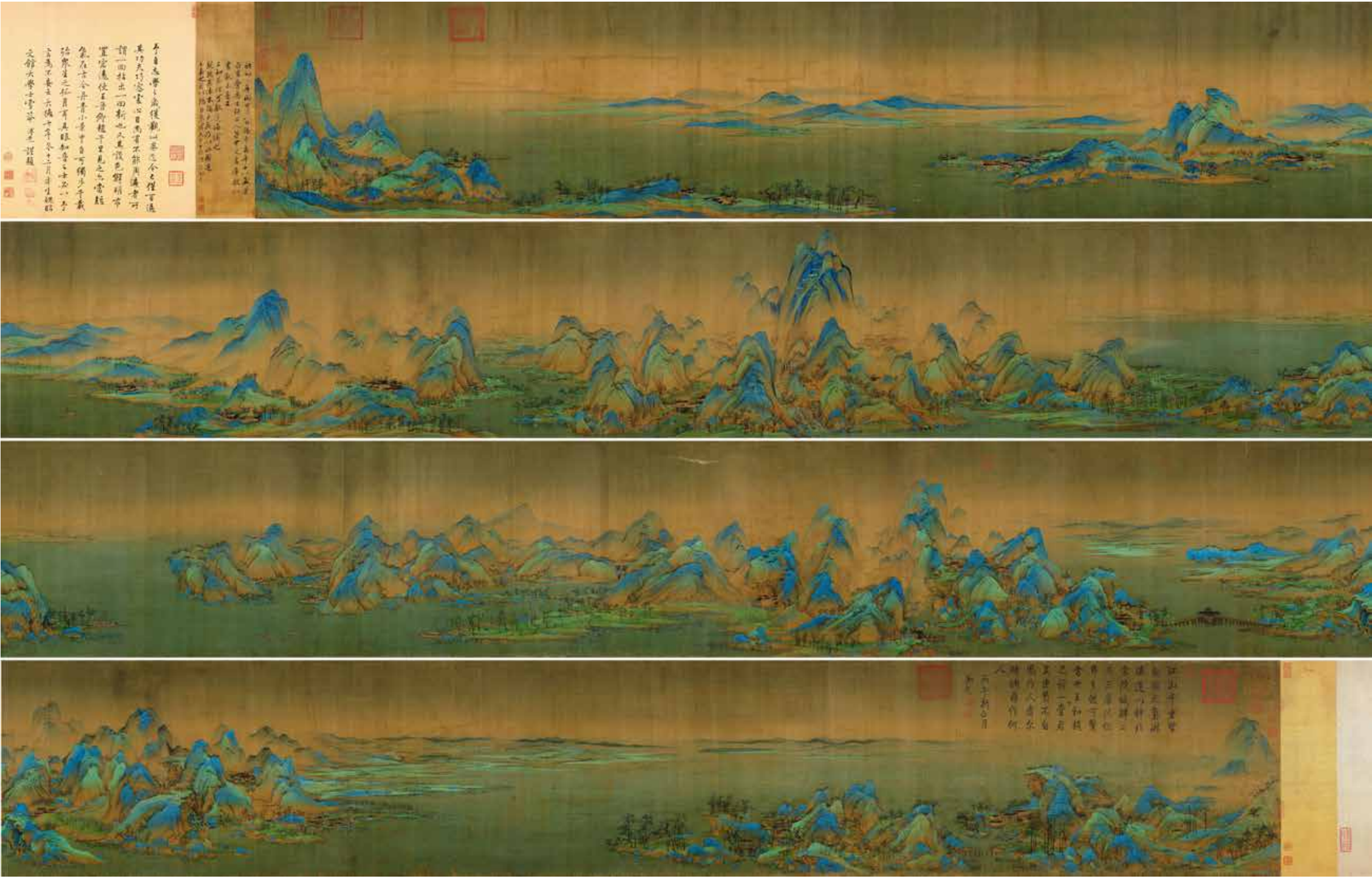
techniques to visually represent the variety and depth of their subject. When the eye of the observer settles on a work composed following these canons, the visual experience will not remain static, because a centre of attraction such as that of the focal perspective will not be present and it would be impossible to observe the whole work without movement, thus cancelling the instantaneousness of the visual experience. This movement will lead him to interact with the work and to feel part of it and not as an external observer. This is precisely because the painter did not interact with the environment as if it were external to it, but lived through it. Many famous painters spent part of their life in the mountains, such as Jing Hao 荆浩 (850-911) in the area of Mount Taihang 太行山 where it was said that he painted tens of thousands of pine trees, or Fan Kuan 范宽 (950-1032) at Mount Zhongnan 终南山, in order to know its secrets and learn to paint natural elements. This attitude of appreciation of the wild natural environment is at the basis of the great development of the mountain and water painting, an attitude that did not exist in the West at least until modern times. But in China, there was the will to know and understand these kinds of environments that inspired wonder and mystery since ancient times. This can be proven in the compilation of texts such as the *Classic of the mountains and seas* 《山海经》, probably composed in the fourth century BCE, a text that encompasses geographical, mythological, medical notions related to mountainous areas, seas and wild areas inside and outside of Chinese territory. The same appreciation for wild nature is found in sentences pronounced by Gu Kaizhi 顾恺之, a famous painter of the fourth century, who was amongst one of the first to apply himself to the mountain and water painting, referring to the beauty of a mountain area: “thousands of rocks compete for beauty , thousands of valleys compete for flow “,”千岩竞秀，万壑争流 “. So, this appreciation of the mountains, which we have found since the most remote periods of Chinese culture, has led them to admire the mountain environments and not to fear them, as happened for most of the development of western culture, especially towards the Alps. At this point, it woulld be necessary to write a whole new chapter about the relationship between nature and man in the West and in China; it will be treated elsewhere.

For these reasons it is not suitable to use the term landscape when referring to the mountain and water painting, the term landscape in the mentality and in western languages, brings with it a whole series of elements, which has only been partially treated, ranging to come into conflict with the relationship Chinese artists have with nature and how to express it pictorially. The absence of the use of the mono focal perspective frees the work from the yoke of anthropocentrism, which severely limits the perception of nature as an extremely vast and complex entity, which cannot be reduced to the mere perceptual rules centred around the artist ego. This problem soon appeared to Chinese artists and theorists of painting, which led to a long and rich reflection that implicitly questioned the limits of sight and how to overcome them, often by bending the visual laws to artistic needs, in order to be able to express pictorial subjects as complex as the natural environment. In conclusion, it should be remembered that in the theory of Chinese painting, representing what you see as you saw it has never been the artist’s goal. Indeed this practice was always highly criticized in the texts concerning painting, a famous verse by Su Dongpo quotes: “who discussed painting in terms of form likeness, has the understanding of a child”, “论画以形似，见与儿童邻”, since all the things are characterized by form (external appearance) and spirit, as Jing Hao in the *Notes on Brushwork*《笔法记》said: “the form without the spirit is a dead form”, “凡气传于华，遗以象，象之死也”.



Wang Ximeng 王希孟 (11th - 12th century)
Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains 千里江山图
Handscroll, ink and color on silk, 51.5 x 1191.5 cm,
The Palace Museum, Beijing.

The *bifa* concept in Jing Hao's *Bifaji*

A brief study of its continuity and significance in Mountains-and-waters painting (Part I)

By; Claudio D. Lucchi

Chinese ink-wash painting (*shuimo hua* 水墨畫) was already practiced during the Tang dynasty[1]. Since then, this particular art form has never ceased to develop. Carefully handed down from one generation of painters to the next, treated like a rare and precious flower by Chinese painters and literati alike, Chinese ink-wash painting has always been (and still is today) a topic of discussion.

Shuimo hua's historical length per se does already reflect philosophical concepts concealed deep inside the life view of the culture that created it. This fact becomes even more intriguing when one compares Chinese painting to its Western counterpart, whose history has more than once been marked by schisms and revolutions.

The concepts and theories underlying these two art systems, as well as the philosophical principles on which they rest further reveal, albeit often dimly and only partially, the unfathomable chasm which separates them.

One of these concepts, *bifa* 筆法, was discussed at length by Jing Hao 荊浩 in his treatise, the *Bifaji* 筆法記 (translated into English by Kiyohiko Munakata as *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi : A Note on the Art of the Brush*[2]).

Through the present paper, I have explored this unique concept, endeavouring to single out the key role it plays in mountains-and-waters painting (*shanshui hua* 山水畫), trying to grasp its philosophical fundamentals and dual — mystical and transcendental, on one side, rational and technical, on the other (see below) — nature. While doing so, I found it relevant to compare various notions inherent to Chinese philosophy with precepts developed within Christian thought. This proved helpful in demonstrating why Jing Hao's *bifa* would lose its significance if applied to Western painting[3].

1. Introduction: Chinese and Western perspectives in Chinese painting studies

At first glance, Chinese pictorial literature distinguishes itself mainly in two respects : its long history, which spans over two millennia, and its fecundity. These bear witness to the historical continuity and unhurried germination of Chinese ink-wash painting.

The large number of treatises and anthologies shows a desire to perpetuate a tradition based on the transmission, from one generation to the next, of a cultural heritage conscious of its historical responsibility.

This impressive literary corpus has already since a few centuries awakened the curiosity of Western scholars. As a result, a great variety of high-quality translations, commentaries, and research papers are available to modern art students, allowing them to deepen their intercultural experience by comparing and cross-referencing original Chinese texts and their translated versions.

In the field of intercultural studies, it is practically impossible to place Chinese and Western painting side by side in order to conduct a comparative analysis. This is mainly due to the considerably different systems of thought which affect them and on which they have gradually come to rest, and the cultural environments in which they endlessly evolve.

This does not mean that comparative studies of any kind are pointless. When judiciously applied, they do indeed present a great interest as they allow researchers and readers alike to gain a better understanding not only of other cultures but also of their own selves, for it is often through the eyes of others that our true self is revealed.

However, when engaging in such studies, particular attention should be brought to historical, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds. When comparing Chinese and Western painting, each should be kept in its own context, thus leading to a sort of parallel comparison. The rendering of ancient Chinese terms in Western languages is but one of the most obvious difficulties present in the field. How to, for instance, translate the Chinese aesthetic term *shen* 神 into divine, or *qiyun shendong* 氣韻生動 into *spirit resonance*, without properly explaining its original semantic value ? Obviously, the context attached to each word is just as significant as the context of the facts discussed.

2. The *Bifaji* 筆法記 and its *bifa* 筆法 concept

Among pictorial treatises, anthologies of painters, treatises on the history of ancient art, and collections of critical essays, some texts distinguish themselves through their formal originality, as well as the innovative nature of the concepts they propose. In this context, the *Bifaji* 筆法記, commonly attributed to Jing Hao 荊浩, occupies a prominent position due to its development of the *bifa* 筆法 concept and its influence on the further development of Mountain and water painting, or *shanshui hua* 山水畫.

The *Bifaji*'s sphere of influence appears to have already spread far beyond China's borders. This is highlighted by at least five translations into English, one in Japanese, and two studies, also in Japanese; not to mention its reproduction in other works devoted to Chinese pictorial art. Hence, more than a thousand years after its composition, the *Bifaji* is still actively read, studied, and analysed.

From a purely linguistic standpoint, the term *bifa* does already constitute a challenge in itself. In his translation[4] of the *Bifaji*, the Japanese scholar Kiyohiko Munakata rendered the term as "art of the brush", while the Italian scholar Maurizio Paolillo interpreted it as "Ars pingendi". While *bi* 筆 translates rather easily as *brush* or *writing tool*, the meaning of *fa* 法 is vaster and more profound, and may be rendered as *law* or

1 王伯敏，《山水画从横谈》，In : 科教文汇（中旬刊）(The Science Education Article Collects), 2019.07. , pp. 106-107.

2 In this article, excerpts from Jing Hao's treatise in the original Chinese are from Wang Bomin's punctuated and annotated version (荆浩 著，王伯敏 标点注译，邓以蛰 校阅．《标点注译 —— 笔法记》．北京：人民美术出版社，1963) ; excerpts in English are from Kiyohiko Munakata's translation (Munakata, Kiyohiko. *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi : A Note on the Art of the Brush*. Ascona : Artibus Asiae, 1974.)

3 For a discussion on how Christianity revolutionised and reshaped the Western world, and on its perdurance at the very core of Western thought, see Benedetto Croce's essay, *Perché non possiamo non dirci «cristiani»*, published in *Discorsi di varia filosofia*, Vol. I, Laterza, Bari, 1945.

4 Munakata, Kiyohiko. *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi : A Note on the Art of the Brush*. Ascona : Artibus Asiae, 1974.

method, or even as *dharma* in a Buddhist context (佛法). Linguistically, Paolillo and Munakata's translations may both be deemed as correct. Munakata's "art of the brush" does however offer a more comprehensive meaning, while Paolillo's "Ars pingendi" appears to concentrate itself on the creative act in painting.

This leads to a second consideration: in a Western context, any painting brush or tool could not possibly be associated with anything more than concepts of *method* or *technique*. For Western painters, a painting brush is a tool that allows them to express their ideas. Its materials and shape may matter little as long as it yields the desired result. Following this principle, it becomes clear that any possible Western *brush method* falls under the much more important discourse about the relationship between form and content, as was for instance discussed by Wassily Kandinsky in his essay *Über die Formfrage* and his book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*. Following Kandinsky's ideas, form has to be regarded by the artist as the spirit's vessel. The choice of a particular form in a given work is thus defined by the spirit the artist wishes to express. How and by what means the desired form is to be attained is entirely left to the artist and is, in a certain way, secondary since all means and efforts must finally lead to one goal, i.e., the spirit.

This is far from being the case in Chinese painting. Throughout its history and up to our present day, various painters have written extensively on the handling of the brush, bringing special attention to brush strokes, their strength and variation, expression of particular feelings and philosophical concepts, wrist movement, etc. What rapidly transpires as one progresses through the numerous texts written on this subject is that in Chinese painting, *bifa* is far more than a mere technique or set of rules. It becomes equally clear that its role in Chinese painting is essential and that the philosophical concepts it rests upon are not limited to the painting field.

2.1. Key role of the *bifa* 筆法 concept

As the author of the *Bifaji* first raises the question of *bifa*, he does so in a most particular way :

The old man said : "If you, a young man, like to study, you can accomplish it in the end. Now, there are Six Essentials in painting. The first is called Spirit (qi 氣). The second is called Resonance (yun 韻). The third is called Thought (si 思). The fourth is called Scene (jing 景). The fifth is called Brush (bi 筆). And the sixth is called Ink (mo 墨)."
I said, "Painting (hua 畫) is equivalent to flower [or outward appearance] (hua 华). That is to say, one obtains reality when he devotes himself to attaining lifelikeness. How could this [simple truth] be distorted ? The old man answered : "Not so. Painting (hua 畫) is equivalent to measuring (hua 畫). One examines the objects and grasps their reality. He must grasp the outward appearance from the outward appearance of the object, and the inner reality from the inner reality of the object. He must not take the outward appearance and call it the inner reality. If you do not know this method [of understanding truth], you may even get lifelikeness but never achieve reality in the painting. [5]

叟曰，少年好学，终可成也。夫画有六要：一曰气；二曰韵；三曰思；四曰景；五曰笔；六曰墨。

5 Munakata, pp. 11-12.

曰，画者，华也，但贵似得真，岂此窍矣。
叟曰，不然，画者，画也。度物象而取其真。物之华，取其华。物之实，取其实，不可执华为实。若不知术，苟似可也，图真不可及也。

This short passage illustrates the fact that painting is far from being an end to itself. It does in fact derive and rely on philosophical concepts concerning perception, reality, and how man interacts with the world in general, already established and discussed before the Christian era by Confucian and Taoist philosophers alike. From a Western standpoint, it becomes crucial to familiarise oneself with these notions, as they constitute the very foundation of the Chinese system of thought, especially since they differ significantly from their Western counterparts.

In the Six Essentials (*liuyao* 六要) outlined by Jing Hao, *bi* [brush] comes only fifth in rank and yet, it must not be regarded as an independent concept but rather as a vital organ within an organic whole. This is pointed out a little further:

Here I will give the detailed instructions of the Essentials of painting. Spirit (qi 氣) is obtained when your mind moves along with the movement of the brush and does not hesitate in delineating images. Resonance (yun 韻) is obtained when you establish forms while hiding [obvious] traces of the brush, and perfect them by observing the proprieties and avoiding vulgarity. Thought (si 思) is obtained when you grasp essential forms eliminating unnecessary details [in your observation of nature], and let your ideas crystallize into the forms to be represented. Scene (jing 景) is obtained when you study the laws of nature and the different faces of time [different times of the day or seasons of the year], look for the sublime, and recreate it with reality. Brush (bi 筆) is obtained when you handle the brush freely, applying all the varieties of strokes in accordance with your purpose, although you must follow certain basic rules of brushwork. Here you should regard brushwork neither as substance nor as form but rather as movement, like flying or driving. Ink (mo 墨) is obtained when you distinguish higher and lower parts of objects with a gradation of ink tones and represent clearly shallowness and depth, thus making them appear as natural as if they had not been done with a brush.[6]

图画之要，与子备言；气者，心随笔运，取象不惑；韵者，隐迹立形，备仪不俗；思者，删拨大要，凝想形物；景者，制度时因，搜妙创真；笔者，虽依法则，运转变通，不质不形，如飞如动；墨者，高低晕淡，品物浅深，文采自然，似非因笔。

Qi 氣 [spirit], *yun* 韻 [resonance], *si* 思 [thought], *jing* 景 [scene], and *mo* 墨 [ink] are all linked to *bi* 筆 [brush]. Although they may theoretically exist each for itself, it is only through bi that they may reach organic unity. In such a context, bi cannot be treated as a painting tool or method [brushwork], neither be regarded as substance nor form "but rather as movement", i.e., a form of creative energy that instills life and gives shape to all things within a painting.

6 Munakata, p. 12.

Jing Hao 荆浩 (9th - 10th century)
Mount Kuanglu (or *Mount Lu*) 匡庐图
Hanging scroll, ink on silk 185.9 x 106.8 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei

An extract from the *Lidai Minghua Ji* 歷代名畫記 by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 may help to better illustrate this concept:

Now, fashioned and distilled by [the interaction of] yin and yang, the myriad phenomena were strewn and spread [through the universe]. Mysteriously evolving without speech, [Nature's] divine work operates by itself. Grasses and trees spread forth their glory without depending upon cinnabar and azurite; clouds and snow whirl and float aloft, and are white with no need for ceruse. Mountains are green without needing malachite, and the phoenix is iridescent without the aid of the five colors. For this reason one may be said to have fulfilled one's aim when the five colors are all present in the management of ink [alone]. If one's mind dwells on the five colors, then the images of things will go wrong.[7]

夫阴阳陶蒸，万象错布，玄化亡言，神工独运。草木敷荣，不待丹碌之采；云雪飘扬，不待铅粉而白。山不待空青而翠，凤不待五色而彩。是故运墨而五色具，谓之得意。意在五色，则物象乖矣。

The painted scene here described is likened to the actual cosmos. When the Six Essentials are correctly and fully put into practice, the painting thus obtained is in fact a microcosm inhabited by the same vital breath (*qi* 氣) which animates the universe, built and functioning according to the same cosmic principle (*li* 理). A work thus created reaches a level of quality described by Jing Hao as divine (*shen* 神), i.e., a work "in which there are no artificial elements and the images are formulated spontaneously as the brush moves" (神者，亡有所为，任运成象). One may now better understand why the Jing Hao deems it so important that individual brushstrokes remain hidden within the painting : a painter in full command of the Six Essentials is actually experiencing "union with the universe"[8] , thus modelling his creative activity on the Dao (道). As he paints, from his brush spring forth spontaneously, as if by themselves, the myriad beings (*wanwu* 萬物) that fill the universe. Everything happens naturally and effortlessly, and the painting, born from itself, shows no sign of human intervention, as if it were a natural part of creation. The brushstrokes that compose it remain hidden within the painted surface, thus rendering a sense of organic unity which symbolises the unity binding the myriad beings that make up the universe.

Through its union with the sixth Essential, i.e., *mo* 墨, the brush further symbolises the harmonious interaction of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. As François Cheng explains in *Vide et plein*, while separated, *yin* and *yang* remain inert. It is only through their union that they may partake in the endless regeneration of the cosmos. The same happens with brush (*yang*) and ink (*yin*), who must operate in harmony so as to generate the myriad beings within the painting.[9] François Cheng rests his explanation on Chapter VII of Shitao's 石涛 treatise on painting *Kugua Heshang* Huayu Lu 苦瓜和尚畫語錄 :

L'*union du pinceau et de l'encre est celle de Yin et Yun. La fusion indistincte de Yin et Yun constitue le Chaos originel. Et, sinon par le moyen de l'Unique Trait de Pinceau, comment pourrait-on défricher*

7 Susan Bush & Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2012, pp. 62-63.

8 Vincent Yu-chung Shi (translated and annotated by), *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p. xvi.

9 François Cheng, Vide et plein, Éditions du Seuil, p. 128, 136.

le chaos originel ? [...] Réaliser l'union de l'encre et du pinceau, c'est résoudre la distinction de Yin et Yun, et entreprendre de défricher le chaos. [...] Au milieu de l'océan de l'encre, il faut établir fermement l'esprit; à la pointe du pinceau, que s'affirme et surgisse la vie; sur la surface de la peinture s'opère une complète métamorphose; au milieu du chaos s'installe et jaillit la lumière! [...] À partir de l'Un, l'innombrable se divise ; à partir de l'innombrable, l'Un se conquiert. La métamorphose de l'Un produit Yin et Yun — et voilà que toutes les virtualités du monde se trouvent accomplies.[10]

The union of brush and ink is that of Yin and Yang. The indistinct fusion of Yin and Yang constitutes the original Chaos. But for the Unique Brushstroke, how could one clear up the original Chaos? [...] Through the completion of the union of brush and ink, one uncovers the distinction that lies between Yin and Yang and one may then begin to uncover the chaos. [...] One must firmly establish the spirit in the midst of the sea of ink. As life suddenly appears at the brush's tip, a complete metamorphosis takes place on the painting's surface; in the midst of chaos appears and springs forth light! [...] Proceeding from One, the uncountable divides itseldf; proceeding from the uncountable, One may be conquered. One's metamorphosis yields Yin and Yang, and the world's possibilities find their accomplishment.

2.2. Cosmic view in the *bifa* concept

As it partakes in the process of cosmic regeneration, the painter's *bifa* becomes a means to "investigate the hidden mysteries of Creation" [11] and probe into man's perception of reality.
The author of the *Bifaji* discusses the aim of painting in the following terms:

I said, "Painting (hua 畫) is equivalent to flower [or outward appearance] (hua 华). That is to say, one obtains reality when he devotes himself to attaining lifelikeness. How could this [simple truth] be distorted ? The old man answered : "Not so. Painting (hua 畫) is equivalent to measuring (hua 畫). One examines the objects and grasps their reality (zhen 真). He must grasp the outward appearance from the outward appearance (hua) of the object, and the inner reality (shih) from the inner reality of the object. He must not take the outward appearance and call it the inner reality. If you do not know this method [of understanding truth], you may even get lifelikeness but never achieve reality in the painting." I questioned : "What do you call lifelikeness and what do you call reality (zhen 真) ?" The old man answered : "Lifelikeness means to achieve the form of the object but to leave out its spirit. Reality means that the forces of both spirit and substance are strong. Furthermore, if spirit is conveyed only through the outward appearance and not through the image in its totality, the image is dead." [12]

曰，画者，华也，但贵似得真，岂此穷矣。
叟曰，不然，画者，画也。度物象而取其真。物之华，取其华。物之实，取其实，不可执华为实。若不知术，苟似可也，图真不可及也。
曰，何以为似？何以为真？
叟曰，似者，得其形遗其气，真者，气质俱盛。凡气传于华，遗于象，象之死也。

10 Pierre Ryckmans, Les propos sur la peinture de Shi Tao - Traduction et commentaire, Arts asiatiques, Tome 14, 1966, p. 107.
11 François Cheng, *Souffle-Esprit*, Éditions du Seuil, 2006, p. 23.
12 Munakata, pp. 11-12.

Shitao 石涛 (1642-1707)
Reminiscences of Qinhuai River 秦淮忆旧图册
Album leaf, ink and colour on paper Image: 25.5 x 20.2 cm ; Overall: 33 x 24.3 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art

The discourse on the relationship existing between lifelikeness (*si* 似) and reality (*zhen* 真) is a very ancient one and plays a crucial role as it highlights the very significance of painting within the Chinese system of thought. In the *Bifaji*, the author proposes a harmonious balance between the object's outer appearance [lifelikeness] and its inner reality, thus implying that like the universe itself, and every single element contained in it must be regarded as an organic whole, characterised by a dual physical-spiritual nature. Kiyohiko Munakata traced Jing Hao's views back to Confucius, citing one particular passage from the *Analects*:

"Where the solid qualities (zhi 質) are in excess of the accomplishments (wen 文), we have rusticity; where the accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities, we have the manners of a clerk. When the accomplishments and the solid qualities are equally blended, we then have the man of virtue."[13]

質勝文則野，文勝質則史。文質彬彬，然爲君子也。

Further insight into this topic might be gained through an excerpt from Zhu Jingxuan's 朱景玄 Tangchao Minghua Lu 唐朝名畫錄 :

I have heard that men of old said that a painter is a sage; doubtless because he searches for that which is beyond heaven and earth, and reveals that which is unillumined by the sun and moon. When he wields a fine pointed brush, an endless variety of things issues forth from his mind. When he displays his talent within a square inch, a thousand miles lie within his grasp. As for conveying the spiritual (yishen 移神) while determining the material (dingzhi 定質), when the light ink falls upon white silk that which has physical appearance (xiang 象) is established, and that which is formless is created.[14]

伏闻古人云：“画者，圣也。”盖以穷天地之不至，显日月之不照。挥纤毫之笔则万类由心，展方寸之能而千里在掌。至于移神定质，轻墨落素，有象因之以立，无形因之以生。

The Chinese world view, developed over two millennia ago, perceives the world through never-ending, self-regenerating natural phenomena. The universe has its *dao* 道, and all there is in it, its own principle. It is imperative that man does not disturb the natural order of the universe, which is perfect and self-functioning. He must on the contrary attune himself with Creation and thus enter in a harmonious state with the world. This is why balance, harmony, and the coherent coexistence of opposites are as much valued in everyday life as in Chinese painting. This makes it easier to explain why Chinese painting is also regarded as a kind of spiritual exercise which allows its practitioner to enter in harmony with the universe.
In this context, the crucial importance of *bifa* in Chinese painting is once again made evident. Nothing may happen without it: the ink would remain inert, and neither *Spirit, Resonance, Thought* or *Scene* could be obtained.

2.3. *Bifa*'s dual nature

In Chinese painting, *bifa* may be said to embody the Chinese outlook on the world and human life. In a world perceived as fluid and endlessly regenerating itself through constant changes, one must maintain an attitude towards life and artistic creation described by Vincent Yu-chung Shih (施友忠) as one of "flexible adaptability".[15] This requires "extreme sensitivity on the part of the artist or poet to the ever-changing situations and needs of the time"[16] and calls for a guiding principle that is not easy to grasp, for it must rest on both knowledge and empirical truth, as well as intuition and natural talent. Under such circumstances, it becomes only natural that the very brushstrokes that make up a painting must be imbued with variation (*bian* 變), as these must express the painter's emotional state.
Jing Hao clearly emphasises *bifa*'s dual character:

Brush (bi 筆) is obtained when you handle the brush freely, applying all the varieties of strokes in accordance with your purpose, although you must follow certain basic rules of brushwork.[17]

笔者，虽依法则，运转变通……。

Although the handling of the brush itself rests on defined rules (虽依法则), these will not yield full mastery of the *bifa* concept. Technical perfection allows painters to create works that Jing Hao deems to be no better than *distinctive* (*qi* 奇) or *skilful* (*qiao* 巧). It may suffice to read the description of works belonging to the *divine* (*shen* 神) class in order to understand what the author considered to be the quintessence of creative experience in painting:

Divine work is that in which there are no artificial elements and the images are formulated spontaneously as the brush moves.[18]

神者，亡有所为，任运成象……。

The artist's state of mind here described may remind one of Vincent Yu-chung Shih when, talking of Zhuangzi's concept of *shen* 神, he describes it as "a state which transcends both the human senses and the intellect, a state in which one forgets the entire world, including his own existence. In such a state, one attains that sudden enlightenment in which one experiences union with the universe. […] His concept of *shen*, when applied to the process of creation, led him to another vision which is equally mystical and equally transcendental, that is, the vision of an effortless creativity born of perfect understanding and comprehension."[19]

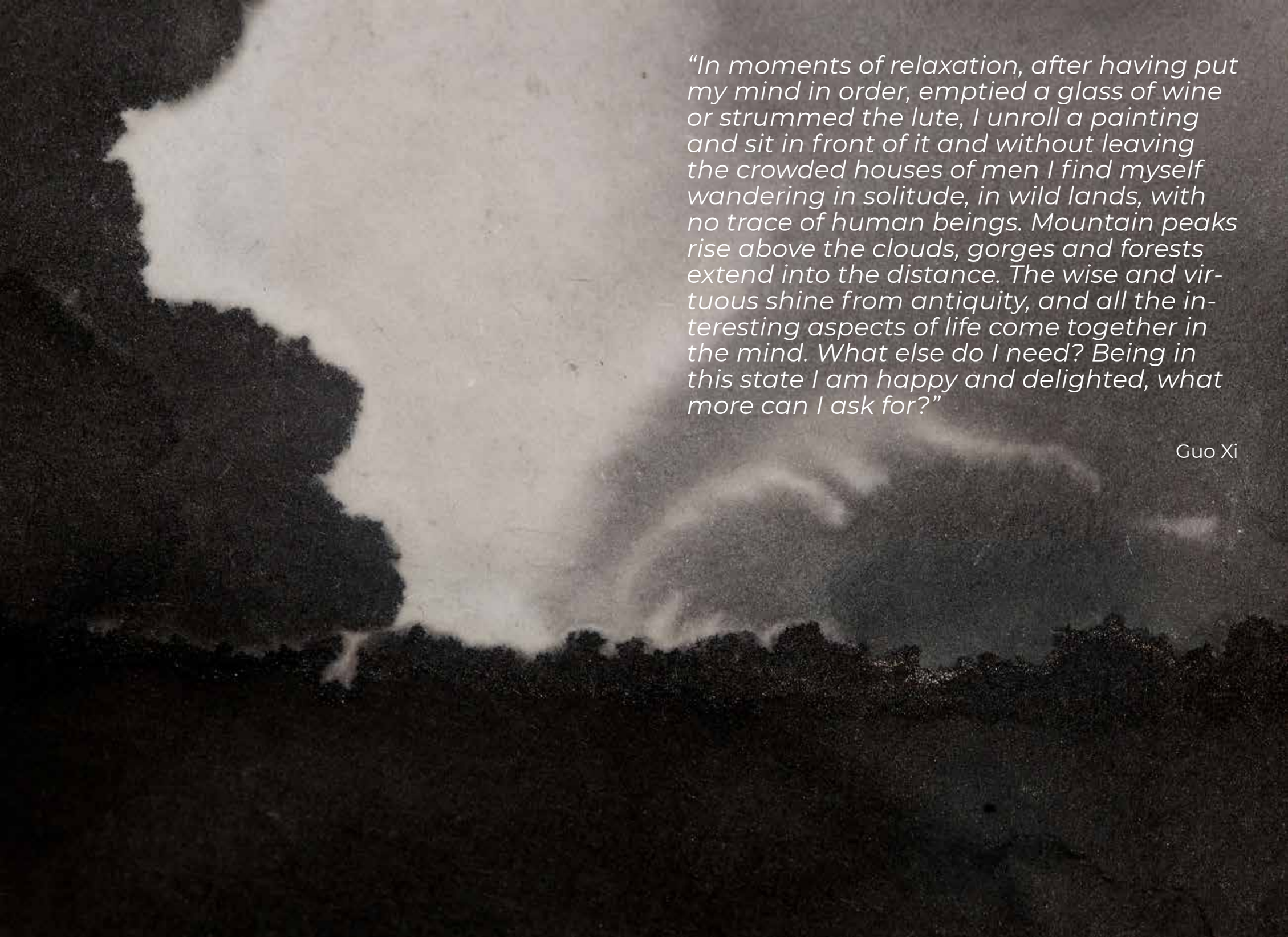
As one reads the *Bifaji*, the connection to Zhuangzi's thought may be clearly felt. Jing Hao does however stress more than once that such an ultimate state of spiritual elevation may only be reached through a process of hard learning.

I wish you would keep working hard. [Truth is that] only when you reach the state of forgetting the technical matters of brush and ink, do you achieve the real landscape painting. [20]

曰：原子勤之，可忘笔墨，而有真景，吾之所居，……。

It thus appears that bifa holds a dual nature : one mystical and transcendental, depending on the artist's talent and intuition, and the other rational and technical, relying on the artist's cognition and training.

13 Munakata, pp. 19-20.
14 Susan Bush & Hsio-yen Shi, pp. 48-49.
15 *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p. xviii
16 *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p. xviii
17 Munakata, p. 12.
18 Munakata, pp. 12-13.
19 *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p. xvi
20 Munakata, p. 16.



“In moments of relaxation, after having put my mind in order, emptied a glass of wine or strummed the lute, I unroll a painting and sit in front of it and without leaving the crowded houses of men I find myself wandering in solitude, in wild lands, with no trace of human beings. Mountain peaks rise above the clouds, gorges and forests extend into the distance. The wise and virtuous shine from antiquity, and all the interesting aspects of life come together in the mind. What else do I need? Being in this state I am happy and delighted, what more can I ask for?”

Guo Xi

Mountain and Water Painting as a Tale

By; Giacomo Bruni

Whenever I have tried to describe a landscape, the method to be followed in the description becomes just as important as the described landscape: I start by conceptualising that the operation is simple, delimiting a piece of space and describing everything I see in it; but here I have to decide if I want to portray what I see from a standing point of view, as painters usually stand, or at least they used to at the time when painters painted landscapes from real - time which lasted three centuries to say the least, a phase very short in the history of painting - or to portray it moving from one point to another within the piece of space so that I can say what I see from different perspectives. Multiplying the points of view within a three-dimensional space. This second system presents itself as the most correct when it comes to a rather large space, where the eyes cannot embrace its surroundings in a single glance; just as how the act of writing is an act of movement in itself. Like how when I'm sitting here writing, I may seem still, but it's the eyes that move, the outer eyes run back and forth following the line of letters that runs from one edge of the sheet to the other, and the inner eyes also run back and forth between the scattered things of memory, and they try to give it a sequence, to draw a line between the discontinuous points that memory keeps isolated, torn from the true experience of space; I have to reconstruct a continuity that has been erased from my memory with the footprint of my steps or the wheels that led me along paths that was once taken hundreds of times. So, it is natural that a written description is an operation that stretches space over time. Unlike a painting, or even more than a photograph, which concentrates time in a fraction of a second until it disappears as if space could exist on its own and enough for itself. But I must say that while I scroll through the landscape to describe it from different points of its space, I am also scrolling through the different moments in time when I was in motion. Therefore, a description of a landscape, being charged with temporality, is always a story: there is an ego in movement, and each element of the landscape is charged with its temporality, which is, with the possibility of being described in another present or future moment.

Italo Calvino

This text by Italo Calvino entitled *Hypothesis of description of a landscape that introduces the volume Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia* (1986), is full of ideas for our considerations on the differences between landscape painting and of mountain and water painting; two forms of art that despite having nature as its subject, have two profoundly different forms of expressions and purpose. In the brief text, we've read how in the representation of the landscape in figurative arts such as painting and photography, creates static works, which describes the landscape as capturing it in its instantaneousness. Since they are limited by a unique and mono focal perspective, it cancels time, leaving space as the only expressive element. This applies to the artist, who with his work deletes the passing of time, and this equally applies to the observer who in a single glance manage to embrace the whole subject, the entire scenery. This is due to the fact that the Western painter by choice and by regards to photography by condition, bends his expressiveness to the laws of optics. As Simmel observes in his fundamental observations on the landscape, a portion of nature is not yet a landscape. An act of the observer is needed which, by looking at it, absorbs the matter and recreates or recomposes it in itself, thus creating the landscape. But this process always develops according to the laws of optics, which is how westerns perceives and expresses the material world, at least from the beginning of modernity onwards. When we talk about the laws of optics we refer mainly to the focal or Albertian's perspective and not so much to the naturalistic representation of the subject. The landscape painters of western modernity voluntarily sought visually real effects, in a period when photography was still taking its first steps; but also looking at contemporary landscape painting we see how the artist has moved away from the mimetic representation of nature, yet it is still difficult to separate it from the slavery of the mono focal perspective, this is probably because it does not detach itself from the anthropocentric vision of the world and the artist "ego" and perhaps because it does not think about the possibility of other methodologies to relate to its surroundings.

Instead, writing, as Calvino explains to us, is an operation that develops in space and time. Since the writer is analysing the landscape from different points of view, moving in space and time, the description of a landscape is full of temporality and this always makes it appear like a story. This idea is also applicable when describing mountain and water paintings, whose realization methods follow those described by Calvino for writing. And this is one of the main factors that differentiates it from landscape painting.

The artist who approaches mountain and water painting does not see the natural environment as a landscape, like a view or a fragment of nature included in the optical cylinder, but relates to it as an environment and not an area limited by sight. The portion of nature that he chooses as his subject, he will then walk and observe it, from near and far. As Guo Xi 郭熙 (1020-1090), a famous painter and theorist of the Song dynasty tells us, the mountains do not have a single shape, but are a set of infinite shapes, which cannot be understood or captured in a single glance. This entails the need to collect different perspectives of the subject of the painting, immersing ourselves in the environment in order to understand its details, proceeding to discover new hidden elements and then observing it from afar to better understand its general structure,

in order to be able to fully understand the mountains, rocks, trees, streams, waterfalls and everything that characterizes the natural environment that we want to translate into the painting.

In reproducing this natural complexity, the painter will have to proceed in a manner explained by Calvino to describe the landscape, therefore following his reasoning, the painting of mountain and water is always like a story. The observation of such a work is a tale and also a dynamic experience, precisely because of the formal characteristics of the painting. The observer is led to travel in it. Since the unifocal perspective is an inadequate mean of expressing the artist's needs, the artist will have to rely on perspective multiplication and this condition makes it impossible for the observer to embrace the painting in a single glance, but would have to travel in it just as the painter did in assimilation phases of the natural environment. This is precisely one of the main objectives of Chinese painters since ancient times. Zong Bing 宗炳 (375-443) wrote one of the oldest texts we have concerning mountain and water painting. In the final section of the *Introduction to painting of mountain and water*, (*Hua shanshui xu*, 《画山水序》) he writes: "In moments of relaxation, after having put my mind in order, emptied a glass of wine or strummed the lute, I unroll a painting and sit in front of it and without leaving the crowded houses of men I find myself wandering in solitude, in wild lands, with no trace of human beings. Mountain peaks rise above the clouds, gorges and forests extend into the distance. The wise and virtuous shine from antiquity, and all the interesting aspects of life come together in the mind. What else do I need? Being in this state I am happy and delighted, what more can I ask for?", "于是闲居理气，拂觞鸣琴，披图幽对，坐究四荒，不违天励之藂，独应无人之野。峰岫峣嶷，云林森眇。圣贤暎于绝代，万趣融其神思。余复何为哉，畅神而已。神之所畅，熟有先焉。".
In these lines we see how appreciating a painting is a process similar to that of reading a book, as in a story, we find ourselves wandering in unknown lands and meeting fantastic characters. In addition to receiving the visual pleasure of the natural beauty in front of us, the painting alienates us from the chaotic reality in which we live in, delighting us but also reinvigorating us spiritually. So, when we look at a painting the eyes naturally follow the paths between the mountains, which can lead us to high peaks with hidden temples and pagodas, or go up a waterfall which enables us to discover a hidden and unspoiled valley. The course of a river may lead us to distant forests that disperse in the fog, whose emptiness carries the eye towards dizzying peaks that rise in the distance. These are just some examples of the experiences we can live by observing a painting, experiences that can coexist in the same work. We have read how Zong Bing unrolled the painting, this is because Chinese painting of any kind is made with ink on paper, so that the works can be easily rolled up and stored. Traditionally the works were not exhibited, but unrolled and observed when required by the occasion. This type of execution and use of the work has also influenced its formats, where as in addition to the more common ones such as vertical, horizontal, square and circular, there are other more particular ones, for example the long scroll, called *changjuan* 长卷, which usually has a height of about thirty centimetres, which can be extended to a length of several meters. This format for obvious reasons, is difficult to expose. The methodology for observing the work is to unroll it and re-roll it from right to left, causing the mountains and rivers to flow in front of our eyes. In this way, the portions of the work fades as they glide in front of us, as if we were leafing through a book, like a story, the subjects are placed in such a way as to make observations dynamic. Exciting scenes of dizzying heights, rocks of all shapes and sizes or ancient lumpy pine trees will alternate calm waters, reeds caressed by the wind or find a solitary traveller who walks among bamboo groves. In the contemporary world, in galleries and museums for obvious conservation reasons, it would be impossible to unroll and roll up the works at will, therefore these long paintings are placed on tables in all their length. Even in this situation it will be impossible to observe the painting with a single glance, but the observer will have to walk along its entire length. In this way movement is created in observing the work, as if a story was flowing before our eyes. In this regard, another interesting text is by a famous painter of antiquity, Gu Kaizhi 顾恺之 (346-407), whom in his notes on the painting *Hua yun taishan ji*《画云台山记》 describes how he proceeds in the realization of such a painting. Its indications concern a whole series of instructions on how to position the mountains, clouds, waters, roads, animals, a master and his disciples, mythological creatures, lights and shadows, creating a sort of tale full of details and vitality.

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Additional characteristics that unites the observation of mountain and water paintings to reading of a story is, as previously declared, the illusion of escaping reality. In fact, Zong Bing tells us that despite being in a crowded city, he finds himself wandering among lonely lands. This is one of the goals that this kind of painting aims to achieve. Guo Xi wrote a famous text on mountain and water painting, (*Linquan gaozhi* 《林泉高致》) he writes: "It is in human nature to feel the hustle and bustle of society and desire to see spirits and immortals hidden in the clouds. In times of peace, under a good emperor and excellent parents, it would be wrong to leave to be alone, because there are duties and responsibilities that cannot be ignored [...]. The dream to retreat in the forests and springs and to find oneself in the company of clouds and mists is always there, but the eye and ear are deprived of it. Now a good hand has reproduced them for us. Without leaving your room you can imagine yourself sitting on the rocks in a gorge and listening to the screaming of monkeys and birdsongs; while the light of the mountains and the colours of the water dazzle the eyes. Isn't it a joy, a realization of a person's dream? That's why mountain and water paintings are so in demand. Approaching these paintings without the necessary mood would mean ruining this magnificent view and clouding the refreshing breeze."

Once again, we see how the effect produced by observing the painting is the same as that produced by reading a tale, in which it takes us to fantastic places and invigorates our soul without having to set foot outside our room.
Thus, although the mountain and water painter use sight as means of knowledge of the natural environment, he will not bow to the laws of optics in his expression. Similarly, as the writer who in describing a subject will not just list its characteristics, but instead will rework them so as to involve the reader, the painter will create a work that will make the observer immerse himself, in which the painting will no longer be an external element, but he will feel inside the painting, free to travel according to his will, healing that fracture, cancelling that space that creates the unifocal perspectives.

As an example, let's take *Early Spring* 《早春图》 (158.3 x 108.1 cm) of Guoxi, painted in 1072. It is one of the most famous paintings of the Song dynasty and in the history of Chinese art, which is currently a part of the collection at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. In this work we clearly see the effectiveness of using multiple perspectives which describes the various portions of the mountains, and not just the front ones suggesting the extension of the mountain beyond the visible. A closer perspective shows us the trees and rocks that are at the base, surrounded by flowing waters brought to the valley through numerous waterfalls coming from the highest areas of the mountains or from valleys that extend in the distance. Similarly, through a higher perspective, the various peaks appear clear to us with their vegetation that merge into the mists. The skill of the painter succeeds through a play of empty and full spaces to give movement to the work and by giving vitality to all the portions of the various rocky masses that form the mountains. The voids of the work which represent the mists, have the role of giving impetus and agility to the massive forms and suggesting the extension of the natural environment that is in front of our eyes. This dialogue creates the movement that will guide

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the eye within the work, enabling it to wander through the mountains, valleys, waters and forests. Our wandering will not be accidental, the structure of the work is such as to guide us to different places. The rocks below attract the first glance as if they were a gateway to the mountain area described in the work. From there, through various roads we can undertake different itineraries that leads us to discover a whole series of elements that are difficult to notice at a superficial glance. These elements can tell us different stories or let us discover "unexplored" areas found in the work.

So, if we start our ascent from the masses of rock and earth to the right, soon we encounter a couple of fishermen, where one of them intents on bringing the boat back to the coast, while the other checks or replaces the fishing nets. Behind them is a waterfall visible from in-between two large rocks (p.1). The vertical course of the waters brings our gaze to rise rapidly to the highest peaks. If, on the other hand, our attention is drawn to the water to the left of the painting, we come across a family of four: a mother with a son on her lap, a father, another son and a companion animal that precedes them. The family is returning from a boat trip, loaded with luggage, which in all

probability heads towards the house surrounded by a reed play that hides amongst the nearby rocks (p.2). Continuing to observe the water area on the left, we notice two travellers walking along a road that runs alongside the mountain and overlooks the stretch of water at the left edge of the work. The two travellers wear large headdresses to protect themselves from the sun and are loaded with luggage. Despite being small figures, we can guess their effort in climbing the path (p.5). The road is hidden by the rocks, but mentally following its path, we are able to find it back. This road leads to a bridge that crosses a distant river and at that point turns into a waterfall. There are three figures crossing the bridge, a wealthy character with a large hat riding a horse, preceded by two walking servants carrying his luggage (p.7). The road continues and disappears between rocks and vegetation, but a little further on we find it back escalating up the mountain, where there are two other characters, one with a hat and a walking stick preceded by another figure who is probably a servant. The servant has his head uncovered, bent by the weight of the carrying a pole on his shoulder and certainly tired from the steep climb (p.3). The path that continues to go up disappears from our sight behind a rocky wall where the top is covered by trees and plants that disappear in the depth and merge into the mists. Even if the road no longer appears before our eyes, we can assume that it leads to the temple complex that is located to the right of the work.

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A series of finely painted buildings develops in a gorge surrounded by rocks and vegetation, on one side they overlook waterfalls and its waters reach the fishermen's boat. In all likelihood, this is the goal destination of the seven characters we met along the path, a path that also indicates a spiritual path, both for the figures in the painting and for the observer, who precisely has the temple as a goal. To the right of the sacred building, there is a pavilion (*tingzi*亭子) on top of a hill, a building dedicated to leisure time, where it is possible to sit and admire the beauty of the nature, play chess, read a book alone or in company etc. Here we notice two empty benches, and right in front of the benches there is a natural fenced terrace, or what we now call belvedere, from where is possible to admire a landscape that we are not given to know, in fact the observer of the work it is located on the level where the landscape would extend, which opens

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up to the view of those who hypothetically overlook the belvedere (p.6). This is one of the elements that manage to project the natural environment outside the painting, extending its borders out of the visible. The same thing happens in different areas of the work, we see how a valley extends behind the temple which is hidden by rocky walls and mists, that guides our eye or towards the top of the main mountain and its sheer walls, or towards the void that frees the gaze and lets it rest on other places of the painting. But if we go back to the bridge where the traveller with the two servants are, our eye could be attracted by the waters that flow under the bridge and go up the river current, which after a series of small waterfalls, takes us to a valley that develops to the left of the work, which reveals distant mountains, trees and mists that extend in the distance and behind the mountain that occupies the central part of the work. The valley takes us away from the main subject of the work and makes us imagine areas that are outside the plane of painting, as if it were a way out of the painting (p.4). If we de-contextualize this portion from the rest of the painting, this can be a work on its own, with its waters, forests, rocks, mountains and mists. Thus, moving away from the main subject, we can return to it through new ways, which are not visually expressed but which can be intuited through the observation of other elements. The area to the right of the valley is covered by a spur of rock that belongs to the main mountain, and afterwards we see another rocky wall that takes us almost to the top, but between the wall and the spur we can see a gorge with a mountain in the distance which seems to belong to the valley on the left, as if there is a road that goes up from the rear area of the mountain to the gorge that is in front of us. If we carefully observe the base of the gorge, we will see another temple appearing among the vegetation, which seems unreachable from the side of the mountain that appears in front our eyes, since there are only sheer walls and sheer rocks (p.8).

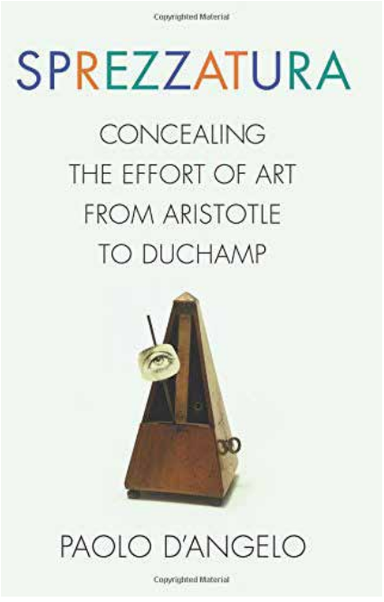
Through this analysis we notice how in the painting there are several stories in progress, taken in medias res, where the characters' actions are in progress and we can imagine where they come from and where they will lead. We also see how the layers of the painting extend outside it, the masses of rocks and soil and the large pine trees at the bottom are the elements closest to the observer, a sort of entrance to the work, which after long wandering can take us to the belvedere terrace which opens up to a

180 degree view which is not revealed to us by the painter, leading us to imagine high mountains or plains, or it can take us outside the painting environment to see ourselves in the act of appreciation of the work. Other routes can lead us to plans that extend into the distance, from which we enter through valleys, gorges or from the voids created by the mists that rise during the early spring.

This is just an example, it is possible to make the same kind of analysis for all the other mountain and water paintings, from the past and from the contemporary times. The structure of the painting will guide us to discover its hidden places, to travel around the mountains and gorges, with the possibility of running into different kinds of characters, from the reality or characters fantasized by the painter. These could be historical or mythological figures or common people as well. Like a novel that could tell us all kind of stories, through different kind of characters and situation, the painter has just to follow his will to make it a more or less narrative work. And to understand this, the observer will have to let the painting guide him through its secrets and hidden places. For this reason, when we approach a mountain and water painting, just as approaching a book, in order to fully experience the piece of art, we have to spend some time with it. It won't merely be enough to give a quick look or a gaze, it is not a kind of art that could be appreciated in its instantaneousness, but would require time and involvement.

Next page:

Guo Xi 郭熙 (c. 1020 – c. 1090)
Early Spring 早春图 (1072)
Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk 158.3x108.1.
National Palace Museum, Taipei



Interview with Paolo D'Angelo

By; Giacomo Bruni

Paolo D'Angelo is a professor of Aesthetics at the University of Roma Tre. A graduate of the University of Roma Uno, "La Sapienza", he received his PhD (Dottorato) from the University of Bologna. He was also the Head of the Department of Philosophy, Communication, Media and Performing Arts of Roma Tre University from January 2013 to December 2018. He was formerly a professor at Messina University (1999-2000). He has taught Aesthetics at Roma Tre since September 2004.

Chief areas of interest: Aesthetics of the visual arts; environmental Aesthetics; analytic Aesthetics; History of Aesthetics; German philosophy; contemporary Italian philosophy.

G.B.

The world in which we live in is a globalized one. The exchange of information is instantaneous, people and goods move freely and with ease. Such technological advances have led us to the illusion that reading one Wikipedia page is enough to possess any type of knowledge - we are then left with pieces of information that do not have any cultural substrate.
This rings especially true when we think about how non-western cultures are discussed - they often get read in a westernized key or, even worse, as just inferior.
We do not seem to believe that other cultures have created systems of thoughts different and equally as complex as the western one, such as the Chinese one for instance.
The basis of all thought systems in China is a holistic point of view that finds its main expression in the concepts of balance and harmony. This fundamental idea is also at the root of the environmental aesthetics that from Yijing reach Confucian and Daoist thoughts.
So, keeping all of this in mind, let me ask you: how can we solve the problems that afflict our times, including those related to the environment? Could adopting somewhat of a holistic point of view aid us?

P.D.

First of all, I am not an expert in oriental cultures, what little I know comes mostly from the attendance of western studies on the matter and from the interest in the landscape, because renowned oriental cultures - in particular the Chinese and Japanese ones - have a long tradition in landscape art.

In your question two things are mentioned that are quite different in my opinion, one is what is currently called ***infosphere*** *- which is the presence of a huge amount of information accessible online - and then the other is* ***globalization****, which are two obviously connected aspects; however, they are not the same, in the sense that the first concerns the transmission of information and the second concerns economic and social interactions. The question "In what sense within these two phenomena can there be a greater exchange between east and west?" precisely qualifies the difference between the two orders of phenomena, in the sense that undoubtedly the presence of such a vast amount of information online could make an exchange between east and west easier. Likewise, it is equally possible that there will be an increase in exchanges caused by the interaction between a greater number of people and relationships. However, I would separate the cognitive theme proper to the sphere of information and the one that is much more complex and full of difficulties which is represented by the phenomenon that currently goes under the term globalization.*

You ask if in the Eastern culture there are elements closer to the Environmental Aesthetics than those practiced or discussed in the Western culture. If you had asked the reverse, the answer would be yes, since it is clear that in the Eastern texts you quoted there is a greater openness towards nature than that that is usually found in western texts.
My perplexity derives from a matter of principle: I have the impression that the comparison between ideologies should be kept separate, that is, on one hand the Eastern philosophies and on the other the Western philosophies and practices (which are the habits, customs etc.), because it seems to me that one of the biggest problems is that if on the theoretical level a difference can be found that is not always found in the practice, in fact there are western philosophers who show this openness towards nature (Hans Jonas or Rosario Assunto, for example).
On a practical level we have to disagree about the fact that the way of life, the organization of society, types of production of consumption, and therefore the repercussions on nature of both the Western and Eastern society are different, indeed they are often extraordinarily similar. I mean, despite the presence of an accentuated sensitivity for nature in Chinese thought, Chinese society is as polluting as and perhaps more than western societies, and similar things can be said about Japan.
Certainly there is a fundamental difference in the attitude towards nature from the theoretical point of view, in the sense that if we look at modern philosophy (the discourse is different for ancient philosophy, because there are authors who could be considered not far from a symbiotic relationship with nature, such as Pythagoras) we see an increase in an instrumental and 'extraneous' conception of nature. The consideration of nature as an object, as an instrument, as a field to be enslaved, exploited,

is accentuated starting from Bacon, but after all, a large part of modern science that stems from modern philosophy tends to see nature in a very different way from how it is seen in the east. This is inevitable.
However, as I was saying before, the product of modern philosophy - from Descartes to Bacon - is in large part modern science, and modern science is in this moment western as well as eastern, and we must be careful in keeping separate the plans of what happens in society and what can be obtained from the thought of the authors.

Environmental Aesthetics has put art aside a little, since the aesthetic experience of nature wants to be lived, of course, in nature; but unfortunately, for a series of different reasons, not everyone can have this experience. This also applies to the environmental problem, which despite being a planetary issue, is rarely felt strongly by people, even more so if an environmental crisis is happening far away from them.
In your opinion, in this contemporary world, can art assume an important role and put man and nature in contact?

On the issue of the relationship between art and the environment, and the possibility that environmental art will help to raise awareness of environmental problems, I would say that environmental art in the West has probably evolved over time precisely in this sense. It started from a very manipulative attitude, very artificial, also very violent towards nature - I am thinking of American Land Art - and it has now gotten to moments of interaction with nature that are lighter, more respectful, more suitable for the contexts in which the art is practiced. Sensitivity has certainly increased, (for example less polluting materials are used). This sensitivity led to act in nature in a non-invasive way, and to simply record the encounter with the environment. The first names that should be mentioned are those of Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. I would say that one of the last phenomena is the presence of an art that wants to act as a denunciation of environmental problems; one representative of this art is England-based artist Olafur Eliasson. He has taken specific actions to raise awareness on climate change and melting ice caps.
This type of sensitivity is certainly present, what must be avoided is a too close relation between ***environmental reporting*** *and* ***artistic production****, not in the sense that it cannot be done, but we must be careful that not just the message, but also the action has some characteristic that brings you closer to the substance. It must not just be a gesture of denunciation, otherwise there is the risk of closing art in the bottlenecks of propaganda, which can be propaganda for very good purposes, but still propaganda remains.*

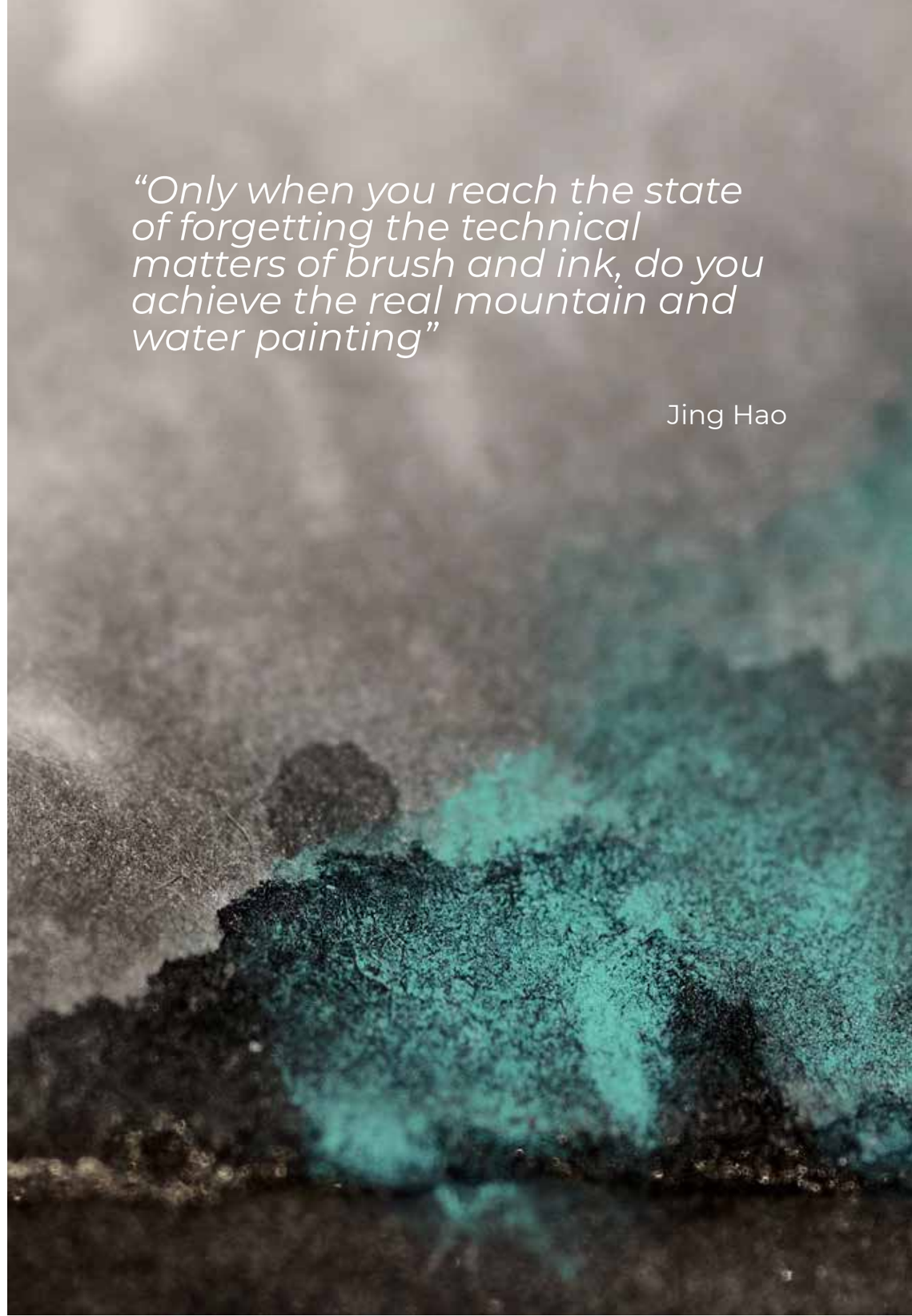
In your studies on the landscape we see how, starting from Simmel's thought, man and nature are two separate elements. Indeed the landscape arises precisely when this division becomes more marked, so much so that Environmental Aesthetics has put aside the term 'landscape'.

Instead in China, what in the west we commonly call Chinese landscape painting continues to be one of the main artistic expressions, but in this pictorial form nature is not represented as seen by the subject, but rather the painter will try to represent nature in its essence, because he does not take a position of superiority over it, nor does he have any interest in representing his materialistic point of view, thus erasing the subject.
Could the almost total disappearance of landscape painting in the western artistic world be linked to this phenomenon?

The separation from nature within the landscape is unfortunately a very true factor. The concept of landscape as it was inaugurated in the West assumes a separation from nature, we always see the landscape in the western tradition moving from a condition of estrangement from nature, there is no perception of immersion in nature or the contiguity between man and nature. The concept of landscape was born on the basis of an original separation.
I'll give a very clear example. There is a poem by Schiller entitled The Walk, which describes the encounter with the landscape starting from the exit from the city. So first of all you must have been taken away, and only then, going out into nature, finding it again, you can perceive the landscape. The premise of all this is that the link has been broken, if there had been no break the notion of landscape as it is in the West would not have formed. This applies to many western landscape theorists.
Basically landscape painting itself is a typical portrayal of the environment of the city. In other words, it begins to spread when and where there is a city life.
The first autonomous landscape painters are painters who work in the city, in Holland or in the Flemish countries. Our tradition of the landscape starts from a condition of separation from nature. This can be observed in many approaches towards the landscape. For example Cézanne - referring to the painting of the mountain Sainte-Victoire in the south of France - says that he sees the landscape, but that the farmers who live at the foot of the mountain and who work the land on the slopes of the mountain do not see the landscape, because they are too much a part of the landscape. This is very characteristic of the western vision of the landscape, a vision that starts from the ***nostalgia of nature, this nostalgia arises from a separation and a distance that the subject tries to overcome****. It is true that there may also be other traditions in the West closer to a man/nature relationship that does not presuppose this separation, but they are basically minor traditions.*
Our vision of the landscape is, again, a very nostalgic one, it is based on an original separation from nature. The same belief that the real landscape is born from nothing more than the reflection of an artistic creation - that is, landscape painting - confirms this way of looking at it. At the base of the landscape there is an artificial operation. From this point of view oriental cultures and oriental landscape painting, in particular Chinese landscape painting, could probably teach us about a different kind of relationship with nature. I repeat I know very little about these cultures, but this very strong element of separation in the theory of western landscape is probably not present in eastern cultures.

Western painting in recent decades has hardly kept pace with other forms of artistic expressions. Could a change of approach towards the world, such as embracing the holistic conception of the existence in a Chinese fashion, give us new food for thought and open new avenues for creativity?

There is no doubt that traditional landscape painting loses a lot of ground in art as it progresses today. After all, the nineteenth century was the last century of landscape painting, in the twentieth century there are artists who paint landscapes (Rosai or Morandi for instance) but there is no real contemporary tradition of landscape painting.
So much so that when the artists wanted to recreate a relationship with nature, they did not go through landscape painting, but towards forms of intervention in nature, forms of environmental art, forms of Land Art etc.
There is no doubt that the purely pictorial tradition of the landscape is in jeopardy. The road that can be traveled today in the West from this point on is represented by the new media. For example, video recordings allow a representation of nature that does not have the characteristics of objectivity, of artificiality that are typical of static landscape painting; therefore ***it is possible to recover landscape experiences in the form of life within the landscape as it relates with nature.***
There are artists, for example the group (a duo in fact) Flatform, which work between Milan and Berlin and produce landscape videos in which one tries to get out of the purely visual dimension, so the landscape is recovered in its auditory dimensions, in lighting, especially in its variable dimensions; it is not presented as a static, but as a moving landscape. This type of approach can allow the creation of a relationship with nature, which in traditional landscape painting seems difficult to rediscover. lighting, especially in its variable dimensions, it is not presented as the static landscape, but as a moving landscape. Probably this type of approach can allow the creation of a relationship with nature, which in traditional landscape painting seems difficult to recover.


“Only when you reach the state of forgetting the technical matters of brush and ink, do you achieve the real mountain and water painting”
Jing Hao

Zhao Boju 赵伯驹 (1120–1182)
Immortals' Mountain pavilion 仙山楼阁图
fan page, ink on silk, 25.6x26.9
Liaoning Provincial Museum

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Reviving the unconstrained color and seeking for the blue-green painting 《重温逍遥色 再寻青绿颜》

The supernatural in the blue-green mountain and water painting

By; Liu Wendong 刘文东

Giacomo Bruni (translator)

The history of the development of Chinese mountain and water painting has gradually evolved from expressing human space cosmic consciousness to personalization, which is basically similar to Russell's description of the history of scientific development: "The sciences have developed in an order the reverse of what might have been expected. What was most remote from ourselves was first brought under the domain of law, and then, gradually, what was nearer: first the heavens, next the earth, then animal and vegetable life, then the human body, and last of all (as yet very imperfectly) the human mind." （*Religion and Science*, 1935）Judging from many existing traditional blue-green mountain and water paintings 青绿山水画，in the initial state of this artistic expression, the favorite subject was the supernatural realm, that is very far away from the human life.

Mythology is the creation of human worship of nature in ancient times, and in ancient China even the mountains were subjected to worship. The first reason is that for the ancients. It was impossible to enter in the deepness and quietness of the mountains, far away from their understanding, where fierce beasts and exotic birds inhabited, in this way a sense of awe for these loci was born. The second is that the mountains were inexhaustible "treasure-house" to the ancestors, so in them borne a sense of gratitude towards the mountains. In the ancient populations view, the mountains were populated by deities, spirits and immortals 神仙. This kind of celestial beings and the mountains were closely related to each other.

Zhuangzi's *Carefree journey* 《逍遥游》, which is full of romantic color, not only embodies the idea that immortals and spirits exist, but also establishes the concept of "travel" and "wandering" 游 , as the core of its space consciousness. Besides the quality of "eternal life", "长生不死", these supernatural beings also have the magical ability of "free ascending", "自由飞升", and this magical ability is precisely the romantic interpretation of Chinese literature and art of the space. "Eternal life" breaks the time limit of human life, so that the individual life can be eternally synchronized with time. The concept of "free ascending" liberates from the living space constrictions that constrains humanity, and places the weak individual life in the vast universe of space and time, transforming weakness into an indefinite magical lightness. The "Journey outside this world", "方外之游" is a concept in Zhuangzi thinking that emphasizes the absolute freedom of individual life, that is a great manifestation of the subjective aspect of the human existence, it is the way the heart and mind travels to all things on earth, free from the constraints of time and space, in order to place ourselves in an ideal environment, and locating the spiritual home (the place where the soul is comforted and where the spirit rests) in an over time and space dimension. The great Zhuangzi transformed and reorganized the real time and space process, and replaced the real living time and space with the fantastic, changeable and free artistic space. In this artistic time and space, life has no end, in a total union with the world; the space of activity is also outside the mental imagery, and the best state of all things and the most fantastic realms are presented in the same time and space, which is beyond the material world supremacy and

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characterized by mysterious and mystical illusory. But Zhuangzi did not write about the distance between the supernatural beings and the reality of mortals, but there is a dialogue and communication between the two, in fact the immortals have a certain degree of humanity. Humans and immortals maintain the best state of being in a lukewarm relationship, in this way the Zhuangzi's *Carefree journey* thought was more easily accepted in the artistic creations of later generations.

The blue-green mountain and water painting is the ideal pattern to seek the celestial being, and it's the ideal schema to achieve physical transcendence. Also, from the pattern of the blue-green mountain and water painting, it's not difficult to see that the immortals are not far away. The supernatural beings can go to the heavenly realm or come down to the mortal world; similarly, mortals through self-cultivation and the practice of ascetism can also become immortals. Therefore, the mountain jungles where the supernatural beings reside could be the same wooded mountain where hermits dwell, and along all the ages those who hid in the mountains forests often said that they encountered these immortals.

The maturation process of blue-green mountain and water painting is not only related to the ideas of supernatural beings, but is also related to the ancient practice of the "palace painting" of the imperial courts and aristocracy, that built all kind of palaces, halls, temples and pavilions. Daoist temples appeared in the mountain and water painting and gave to the viewer a visual sense of "temple spirituality". In order to pursue the realm of immortality, the emperors and rulers in the sphere of their jurisdiction spared no effort to build palaces on a large scale, build temples and cities, in order to satisfy their "roaming to the land of immortals", "游仙" and "escaping from the world", "逃世" ideals and the inspiration to find the way to immortality. As it can be seen, the dwelling places of mortals and immortals aren't separated from each other.
Li Sixun (李思训，651-716) and Li Zhaodao (李昭道, 675-758) (p. 2, Li Zhaodao - *Emperor Minghuang's Journey to Shu* 《明皇幸蜀圖》, National Palace Museum, Taipe), aristocrats father and son of the Tang Dynasty, took the rigorous blue-green painting style of Zhan Ziqian (展子虔, 545-618) and his ability to paint everything in an excellent way (触物留情，备皆绝妙) and developed it at the highest level, and created the school of gold-green 金碧and blue-green mountain and water painting (his Stroll About in Spring is believed to be the oldest Chinese landscape painting that has survived). With a majestic conception and the association of the illusory space where the celestial beings are, and with the "gold inlay", "镂金", they became the fixed pattern of "mists and clouds realm of immortals ", "烟霞仙圣之境" , and at this point the "supernatural beings style" "神仙格调" of "blue-green" and "gold-green" mountain and water painting was standardized. The majestic wonderland and the magnificent real world often appear in the painting combining the living environment of the human world with the imagination of the immortal world, creating a harmonious unity (p.1).

Once upon a time science destroyed the desire to find supernatural beings, the empirical laboratory replaced the imagination of the heavenly steed soaring across the skies with the truth of the knowledge, it replaced the fantasy of literature. With the invention of the submarine, we were told that the *Dragon Palace* doesn't exist. The airplane broke the myth of a Heavens Palace, the search and speculation of the realm of the unknown seemed no longer a beautiful expectation.

The blue-green mountain and water paintings are also required by a kind of visual reproduction of the material objects, the mountains no longer have celestial beings, and the heart does not seek to hold in awe and veneration anymore. The teaching of sketching of the landscape enhances the ability to depict the scenario, but also limits the extension of imagination power, or it could be said that this belongs to another form of copying. However, its effectiveness has been recognized by the world. But art can be pluralistic, and the parallelism of the two methods is not necessarily a bad strategy.
Perhaps this is my groundless fear, but I really want to relive a kind of unconstrained way of handling things.

Liu Wendong was born in Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province in February 1971. In 1996 he graduated from the Chinese Painting Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts with a Bachelor of Arts degree. In 2002, he graduated from the Chinese Painting Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts with a Master of Arts degree. From 2002 to 2008, he taught in the Department of Fine Arts of Guangdong Institute of Education. In 2011, he graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the China Academy of Art with a doctorate in literature. In 2014, he did post-doctorate of Communication University of China in "Art and Science". He is currently the deputy secretary of the Party branch of the Chinese Painting Academy of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, director of the mountain and water painting studio, an associate professor, and a master tutor (p.3).

Notes on Cai Liang's Paintings

By; Giacomo Bruni

Wenrenhua, *(Chinese: "literati painting") refers to an ideal form of the Chinese scholar-painter who was more interested in personal cultivation and expression than in literal representation or an immediately attractive surface beauty. First formulated in the Northern Song period (960–1127)—at which time it was called shidafuhua 士大夫画 by the poet-calligrapher Su Dongpo 苏东坡 - the ideal of wenrenhua was finally and enduringly codified by the great Ming dynasty critic and painter Dong Qichang 董其昌.*

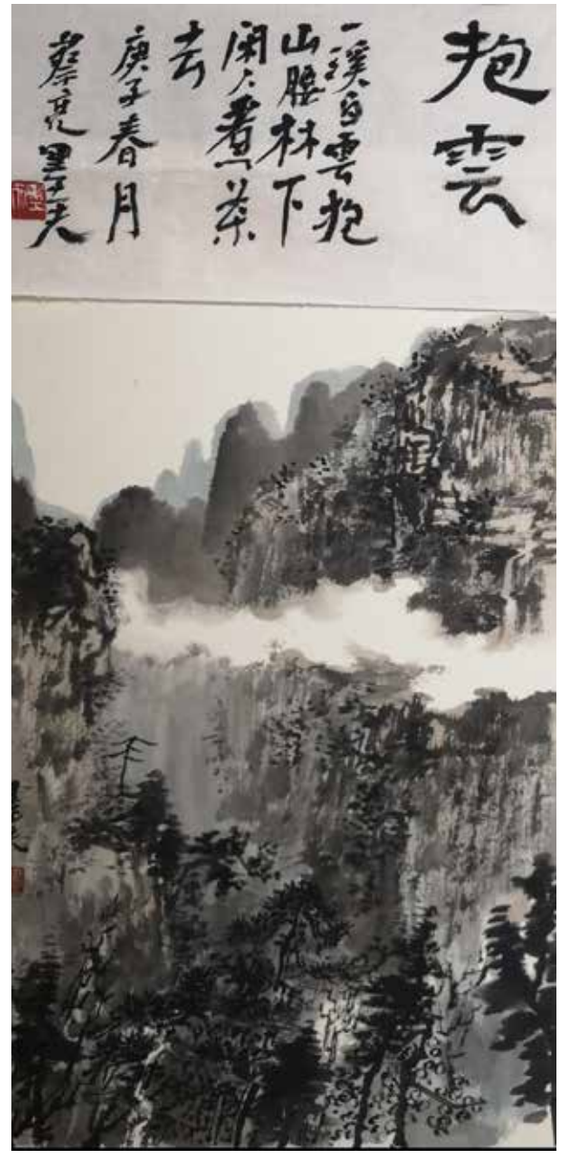
According to the principle of wenrenhua, the completely literate, cultured artist—learned in all the humane arts—who revealed the privacy of his vision in his painting was preferred over the "professional," whose paintings were more obviously pleasing to the eye. The contrast is overly categorical, but it is useful still in understanding the major interests and intentions of Chinese painters through the ages.

Cai Liang, is a thriving young artist from Guangdong province in Dianbai city. His artistic name is Mofu 墨夫, this name represents his desire to grow old in the company of the ink, in other words to never stop practising painting and calligraphy during his life time. He is both a painter and an art educator based in Zhongshan city. Cai Liang learned Chinese mountain and water painting and it's theory from his early studies. He also mastered in western oil painting techniques. Driven by the love for the literati painting, *wenren hua*文人画, he deepened the study of the tradition, combining it with painting, poetry, calligraphy and seal cutting.

Following the literati vision of art and culture, Cai Liang learned both from ancient and modern masters. Guided by the spirit of innovation and research, he merged the traditions of the wenren hua with free, expressive and powerful uses of the brush. The practice of calligraphy is a fundamental element that blend with the study of painting, for this reason the strokes that characterises his calligraphy and the strength of the carved characters in his seals can be found in his painting. Although he prefers to use smooth and "round strokes" (*yuanbi* 圆笔), he also uses the "square strokes" (*fangbi* 方笔), strokes characterized by clear edges and corners, that communicate a sense of determination. The merging of these two brush techniques enrich his paintings creating an inner effect of movement and variation in his works. The free hand brush strokes are able to reflect the verve of the scenery and express the author's feelings.
The contrast between the ink splashing technique and the use of the lines in Cai Liang's mountain and water paintings are accompanied by the application of light colours, usually various shades of blue and brown. His accurate and rich use of water reflects the soul of Lingnan school painting techniques, with the result of an ample yet balanced ink and colour changes and shading, that confer a high degree of naturality and vivacity to the depicted subjects.

Mists and fogs are represented by empty spaces, which brings balance and breath to the painting and gives the viewer the freedom of roaming all around the landscape. Sometimes Cai Liang uses a darker background colour in order to represent the sky, and again through the combination of water and ink, the contrast between light and dark sometimes produces a melancholic atmosphere, that adds a romantic charm to his works. The performance of the background, the blank clouds and fog recall echoes of the techniques of the Song Dynasty mountain and water paintings. Mediated by Cai Liang aesthetic taste, artistic views and his powerful brush strokes, he successfully expresses the "image" *xiang* 象 of the mountains, waters and the other natural subjects of his painting, instead of the "shape" *xing* 形 in accordance with the theoretical principles in Chinese paintings, against the mimetic representation of the subjects.

Part of Cai Liang's artistic productions belong to the category of flower and bird paintings, where he successfully combines the artistic vision of literati, reshaping the traditional themes with innovative spirit. Here the use of the brush and the ink belongs to the category of the Free hand brush style *xieyi* 写意 (literally means "writing, painting the idea or meaning"). He successfully emphasizes the semblance and the spiritual aspect of the subjects. Like in his mountain and water paintings he doesn't chase for the physical similarity of the subjects but he is able to grasp its essential spiritual characteristics. Cai Liang's paintings are both in colours and black and white. The colours he uses are very bright, giving the subject a great vivacity and a strong visual feel, and at the same time expresses the spirit of the subject.



In his black and white paintings, the dialogue between water and ink is extremely rich and precise, making the subject itself express a high degree of vigour that makes the image extremely vivid. Hence, even with the absence of colour in his black and white paintings, our eyes are able to perceive the colours of the subject.

In his paintings we can see the artist's will to express the spirit of the *wenren hua* with modern techniques. This type of thinking places Cai Liang within a debate that began in China at the beginning of the last century and which over time becomes more and more varied and animated. The main theme of this great reflection is on in what form painting must express itself in order to express the contemporary spirit of a nation, taking into consideration the current Chinese cultural situation and its relations with the outside world. During the history of Chinese art this reflection has always been present, especially when there were historical changes, such as the establishment or fall of a dynasty. Each historical moment has its own particularities, and the artist's task is also to express the spirit and character of his era. This reflection often has as its main aspect, the relationship with tradition and how it should be expressed and to which tradition to refer, what are the aspects that best adapt to the state in which the artist operates and how it will draw from it, what to accept and what to refuse, what to change and what to renew. All of this united and synchronized with the artist's personal style and aesthetic ideas. In contemporary times, this situation arises again in a complexity that is perhaps unprecedented in Chinese history, as China has never had to relate to the world outside it (basically the western one) like now, receiving such a massive influence from all points of view. It is not the first time that China has received influences from cultures that lie within and beyond its borders, what has changed is the amount of these influences and the relationship they have with China and how it relates to them. At the same time, the influence of Western culture, in addition to being on a global scale, also has an aggressive character in some aspects and at the same time China accepts these influences because it believes it is the way to be able to position itself at the same level as Western nations in economic, political, cultural and global dialogue. This had never happened in the past, in fact until the first major defeat of the opium war, which saw imperial troops succumbing to western technology, China had always

considered itself the main culture worldwide, therefore the way of relating to other peoples was never on par. The same is true for the artistic sphere, at the beginning of the 20th century China began to come into mass contact with western art, which has a distinctly different approach from that of China, and this influence has brought many innovations , has opened many areas of reflection and continues to open them up to the present. The main problem is how to relate to this great imported system, resulting in very different reactions. There are artists who do not want to come to terms with western art, so they try as much as possible to limit their influences and focus on the study of tradition and how to reinterpret and enrich it without introducing western elements. On the other side of the spectrum of different kinds of attitudes there is one of those who consider it important to embrace western artistic methods, both from a theoretical, ideological and practical point of view, who using the traditional Chinese materials (brush, paper, ink and colors) radically renew pictorial practices, because they see the era of change in contemporary times and find an important source of inspiration in Western art. It should be noted that what defines Chinese painting in general way are the materials used and not so much the techniques, therefore there are no expressive limits if not precisely the material ones, since if other means of artistic production are used, it leads to other practices. In any case, no tradition

or artistic vision that is Chinese or Western should be followed slavishly and passively, but it must be learned and reworked, used to enrich one's vision and artistic practice, in fact the legacy of the masters of the past, or of the contemporary will help to have a vision wider and more complete of the artistic panorama and society in general. Cai Liang places himself in this debate in an intermediate position, which sees the importance of maintaining a close relationship with tradition, in particular that of the *wenren hua*, but at the same time is aware of the contemporary status of mountain and water painting and western cultural sphere, whose ideas and conceptions often can enriching artistic expression and giving unprecedented impetus to creativity. As already mentioned, the tradition must be inherited, and the artists cannot transform himself into other masters, otherwise his work is just the work of a copyist, without any contributions to the evolution of the arts.

Cai Liang has successfully created his own unique painting style; he came into contact with new conceptions and studied new techniques from the west. Like the perspective of Western paintings, the water colours and oil colours, the lightness in photography, chiaroscuro of the pencil and the dialogue between lights and shadows, and subjects outside the sphere of mountain and water painting, like figure painting and other subjects. His hope is to inject new blood into Chinese painting, which embodies the value of the tradition with a contemporary spirit.

A poem by Cai Liang:

山居

一溪白云抱山腰
林下书童煮茶去
不羡尘世功与名
午后风来拥书眠

Living in the mountains

A stream of white clouds embracing the mountain waist,

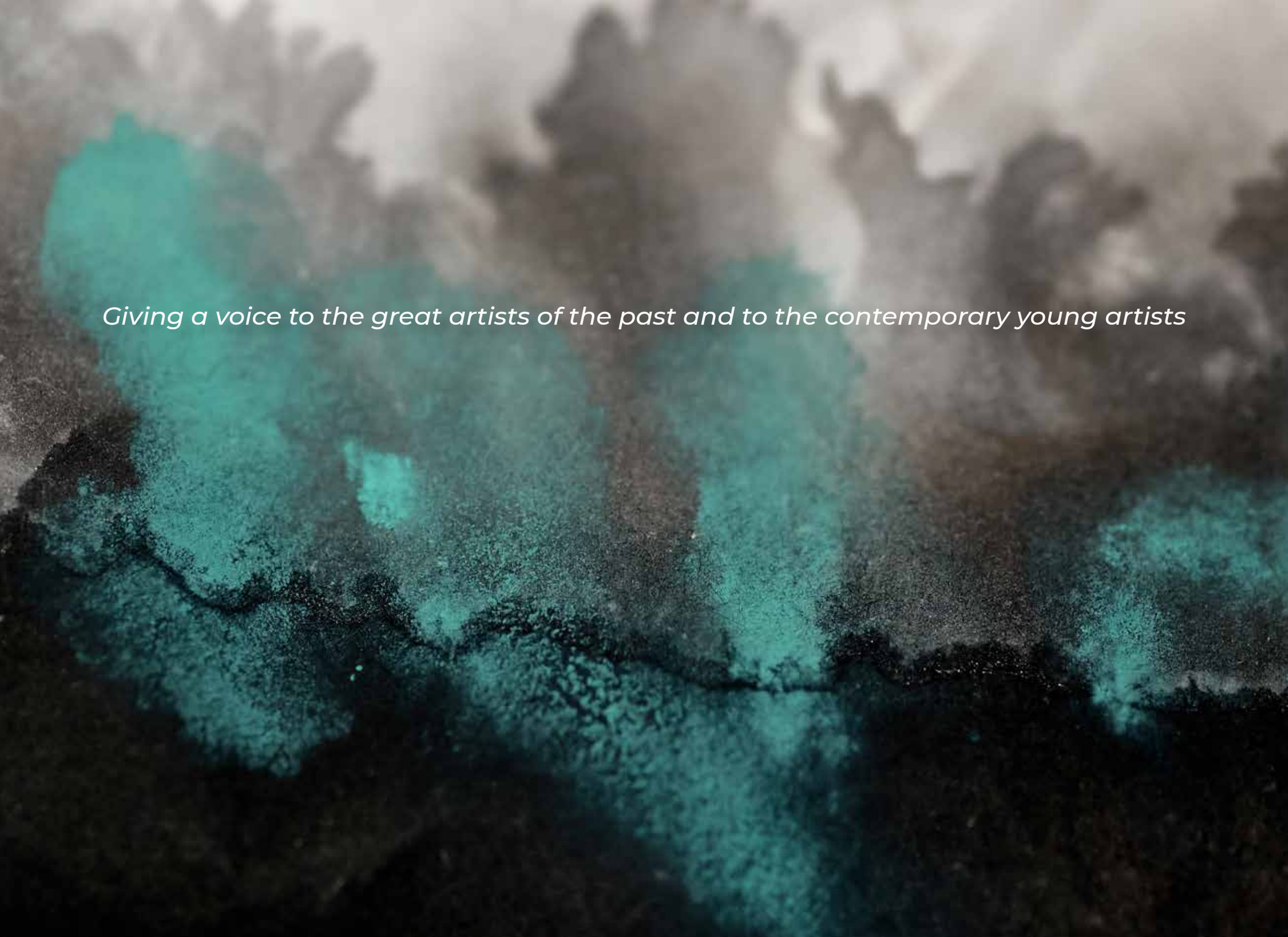
The schoolboy under the forest prepare tea.

Don't envy worldly achievements and fame,

Afternoon wind is here, embrace the books to sleep.

此地有高山峻嶺

何處無明月清風


Giving a voice to the great artists of the past and to the contemporary young artists

Bibliographical notes and further readings

By; Claudio D. Lucchi

This section briefly introduces the Reader to the main treatises on Chinese painting mentioned in the present issue, and which have exerted profound influence on the history of this particular literary corpus. Existing translations are also listed as further reading.

***Lidai Minghua Ji* 历代名画记 :**
Compiled around 847 by Zhang Yanyuan 张彦远 (ca. 815-after 875), the *Lidai Minghua Ji* 历代名画记 (*Record of Famous Painters of All the Dynasties*) is a precious historical document, as it is the main source of facts about artists from Tang and pre-Tang times. This exhaustive work comprises introductory essays, biographies, critical appreciations, and discussions on connoisseurship. Zhang Yanyuan also took care to include critical opinions by other critics, thus turning the Lidai Minghua Ji into an equally important source for the writings of various Tang critics.

The *Lidai Minghua Ji* was translated by William Acker and published in S*ome T'ang and Pre- T'ang Texts in Chinese Painting* (2 vols.). Excerpts from the *Lidai Minghua Ji* can be found in Osvald Sirén's *The Chinese on the Art of Painting*. Lin Yutang 林语堂 and Susan Bush (who worked with William Acker's version) both devoted a whole chapter to the *Lidai Minghua Ji* in their respective monographs, *The Chinese Theory of Art* (by Lin Yutang, pp. 43-62) and *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (by Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, pp. 45-88).

***Bifa Ji* 笔法记 :**
The *Bifa Ji* 笔法记 (*A Note on the Art of the Brush*) was composed by Jing Hao 荆浩 (ca. 870-ca. 930) in the form of a Taoist fable (神仙谈) during the period of the Five Dynasties. Despite its somewhat unusual literary style, the *Bifa Ji* may be regarded as one of the earliest texts proposing an in-depth discussion of the concept of *bimo* 笔墨 (brush-and-ink), and in defining its key role within pictorial creation. Jing Hao's treatise thus constitutes a milestone in the history of Chinese painting theory.

To this day, there exist five major English translation of Jing Hao's Bifa Ji. In chronological order, these are: Arthur Waley, *An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting* (London, 1923, pp. 169-170); Osvald Sirén, *A History of Early Chinese Painting* (2 vols., London, I933, pp. 123-125) and *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (Peking, 1936, Appendix IV, pp. 234-238); Shio Sakanishi, *The Spirit of the Brush* (London, 1939, pp.85-96). The most thorough and fully annotated translation of the *Bifa Ji* is Kiyohiko Munakata's *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi: A Note on the Art of the Brush* (Ascona, 1974, pp. 1-9, 11-56).

***Linquan Gaozhi* 林泉高致 :**
The *Linquan Gaozhi* 林泉高致 (*The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*) was composed during the Song Dynasty, a period usually described as the golden age of Chinese painting. Compiled by the scholar-official Guo Si 郭思 (active ca. 1070-after 1123), the *Linquan Gaozhi* presents the reader with Guo Xi's 郭熙 (after 1000-ca. 1090) — Guo Si's father and the most famous landscapist of his time at the Imperial Academy— views on the art of painting, its philosophical significance, and its technical "secrets".

Parts of the *Linquan Gaozhi* were translated by Lin Yutang in *The Chinese Theory of Art* (pp. 69-80) and Osvald Sirén's *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (pp. 43-52). A full translation may be found in Shio Sakanishi's *Lin ch'üan kao chih. An Essay on Landscape Painting* (London, 1959). The *Linquan Gaozhi* is also discussed and presented in part in the fourth chapter of Susan Bush's *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (pp. 141-190).

***Kugua Heshang Hua Yulu* 苦瓜和尚画语录 :**
The *Kugua Heshang Hua Yulu* 苦瓜和尚画语录 (*Sayings on Painting of Friar Bitter-Melon*) was composed by Shitao 石涛 (1642-1708) around 16601, a time marked in painting by an overwhelming tendency towards arid academism. This particular treatise is marked by a strong originality and philosophical flavour. Described by Lin Yutang as the "best and deepest essay on art written by a revolutionary artist", and by Pierre Ryckmans as offering "one of the highest and most complete expressions of Chinese aesthetics", it distinguishes itself through the yihua concept 一画 (concept of the single brushstroke) and the unique emphasis it sets on artistic creation.

Two monographs have been written in English on Shitao and his treatise on painting: *Philosophy of Painting by Shih-T'Ao: A Translation and Exposition of His Hua-P'u* by Earle Coleman (The Hague, 1978), and *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* by Jonathan Hay (New York, 2001). Earlier translations may be found in Osvald Sirén's *Chinese Painters Leading Masters and Principles* (7 vols.; New York, 1956-58, Vol. V, pp. 171-172) and Lin Yutang's *The Chinese Theory of Art* (pp. 140-156).
Another important translation (in French) of Shitao's treatise is Pierre Ryckmans' *Les propos sur la peinture de Shi Tao - Traduction et commentaire* (published for the first time in 1966, Arts Asiatiques, Tome 14, pp. 79-150). *Shitao (1642-1707) - La saveur du monde* (Paris, 1998) is a comprehensive study on Shitao and his art by the French academician, writer, poet, and calligrapher François Cheng 程抱一. in recent times a complete tradition in Italian has been published by Marcello Ghilardi in *Discorsi sulla pittura del monaco Zucca Amara* (Milano, 2014).

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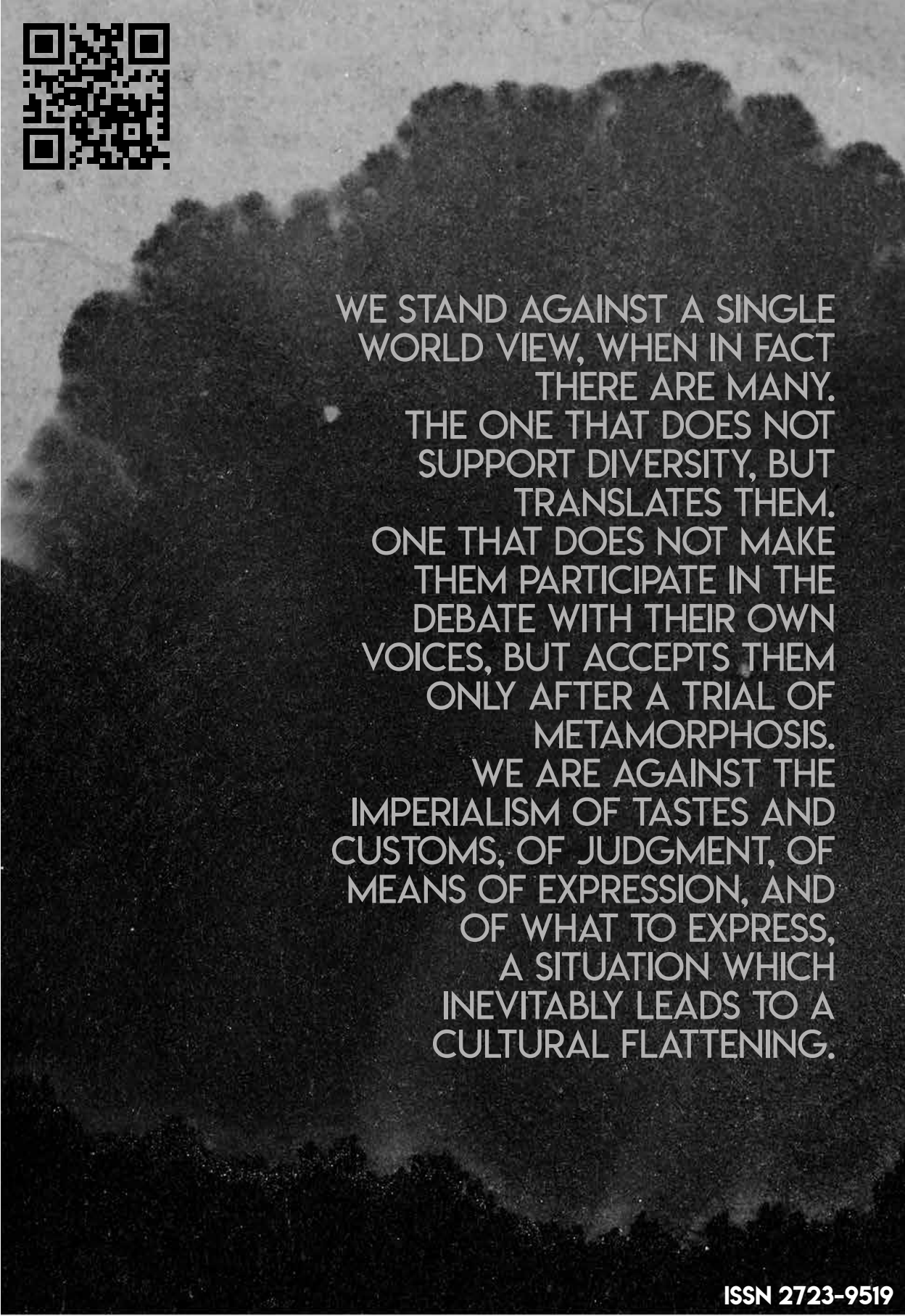

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